

Pocket Series
No. 152.

BEADLE'S

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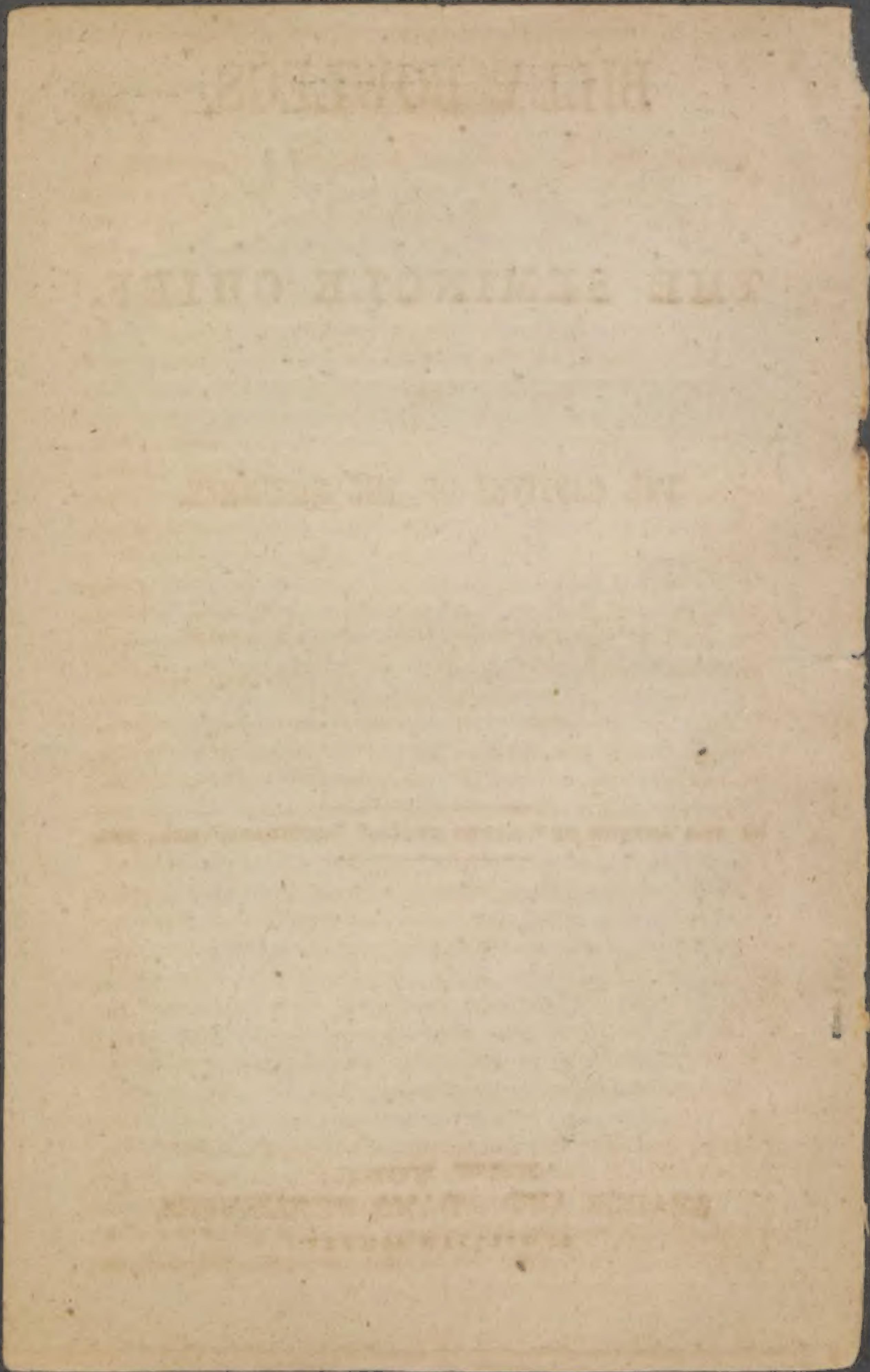
POCKET NOVELS



Billy Bowlegs.

152





BILLY BOWLEGS,

THE SEMINOLE CHIEF.

OR,

THE CAPTIVES OF THE KISSIMMEE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SILVER BUGLE," "QUINDARO," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
28 WILLIAM STREET.

COLLECTED
BY
JOHN B. BEADLE
AND
PUBLISHED
BY
BEADLE AND COMPANY,
1865.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1865, by
BEADLE AND COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

BILLY BOWLEGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

THE Everglades of Florida! How much of interest clustered around them during the memorable war of 18—. How many scenes were there enacted, presenting all that is terrible in warfare, both civilized and barbarous! The midnight massacre, the desolating flame, the stake and the gantlet, the pursuit and the ambush, broken treaties and vile treachery, the captive maiden and the gray-haired sire, terror and blood, were familiar topics in every household throughout the happier regions, while in that wild country the reality was felt to its fullest extent. Twenty millions of people were eagerly watching the movements of those two warrior chieftains, Colonels Taylor and Twiggs, expecting a happy termination of hostilities, and another star to be added to those shining amid the constellation of America's Own.

At the time of which we write, there had been a cessation of hostilities for over a year. That is, of *actual* hostilities. But the Seminoles were becoming very bold in their depredations, which had been continued for several months, while the commander of the United States forces used his best endeavors to put an end to them by the capture and punishment of those directly connected with each outrage. This, however, he found very difficult to accomplish; and at length gave notice to the chief of the Seminoles—an intelligent but relentless Indian, or half-breed, known as "Billy Bowlegs"—that, if his warriors did not observe, to the letter, the treaties which had been made between his tribe and the Federal authorities, he might expect extermination.

In justice to the chief, we are compelled to say, that he did not encourage, or even countenance, the outrages committed

by his men upon the defenseless settlers. He was, nevertheless, burning with hatred toward the pale-face invaders of his soil, and the word "extermination" grated harshly upon his ear. He therefore returned a defiant answer.

At that time, Colonel Twiggs, (afterward General,) occupied a post of considerable importance at Tampa Bay, near the spot where now stands Fort Brooke. Under his command were about three hundred soldiers. They held possession of a rude, though strong work, known as Fort Chickakanicle, an appellation given it by the garrison. There was, also, quite a settlement at this point, perhaps thirty or forty dwellings, some of which were occupied by soldiers and their families, others by settlers and transient traders, drawn thither from its importance as a military post.

Directly across the country, and toward the Atlantic coast, there had been cut a military road, through a dense forest, a distance of perhaps a hundred miles. This had been done for the purpose of exploring the interior of the State, for the pursuit of the savages, and for the removal of the valuable live oak which is found so abundantly in that locality. This road terminated at a beautiful sheet of water known as Lake Kissimmee. A river of the same name, which forms the outlet of this lake, flows through a most lovely valley, emptying its clear waters into Lake Okeechobee. This latter lake is of considerable importance in size, notwithstanding it is situated far inland, with no body of water of any size connecting it and the ocean or bay. It is comparatively unknown to fame, although, at the present time, it can boast of several small settlements along its margin, while on its northern shore is a fort known as Fort Floyd. Directly south of this lake are the Everglades of Florida, which afforded such protection for the savages, who, seeking shelter within them, and guided by the cunning Billy, so long baffled the efforts of our troops for their capture.

It was a night in the month of December. The winds swept across the Gulf, and sighed mournfully through the oaks, and the mad waters lashed the base of Chicakanicle with a fury unprecedented. The guard buttoned his coat tightly around him, and shuddered, for even in those Southern

latitudes, the nights of winter are sometimes bitterly cold. It was perhaps the hour of eleven. Every thing within the fort and settlement was quiet, and only an occasional light gleamed from a trader's cabin or some officer's quarters. Presently, a voice was heard to exclaim :

"Halt! Who comes there?"

In answer to the challenge of the sentinel, a voice replied :

"An old man from the lake wishes to see the commander."

"Impossible to-night. He has retired."

"But my business is most urgent."

"Business always is."

"But, sir," continued the old man, "it is concerning the Indians, and a renegade, and *my only daughter, too!*" The voice quivered with emotion. "An hour's delay may ruin all. I pray you, inform the colonel what I say."

"Well, I'll try. Hold on a bit. Corporal of the guard," called the sentinel. In a few moments this person made his appearance, and, after learning the occasion of the call, he determined at once to consult the lieutenant of the guard. This being done, the officer replied :

"Certainly. Bring the old man to my quarters at once." The applicant was soon within the fort, and was met by the lieutenant.

"I thank you, sir, with all my heart," said the old man. "My child is gone—has been taken—" he could not proceed, for his choked voice failed of utterance.

"Never mind now," interrupted the officer. "I understand you are in trouble with the red-skins, and that your daughter has been torn from you. This is enough for Ned Judson to know, until you make further statements in the presence of the commanding officer. Follow me." He led the way through a long range of winding passages, and at length paused at the door of an ordinary-looking building. A light was visible through a small window, which was curtained, however, thus preventing any person from the outside from peering within. The lieutenant knocked loudly at the door.

"Come in," was the quiet response. The party entered.

Seated at the table, examining some papers, was a man of marked appearance. He was powerfully built, while his beard, which was almost white, covered his chin and throat,

hanging in heavy masses upon his breast. He arose to receive his visitors. A person of more commanding mien did not belong to the service. It was Colonel David Twiggs.

"What is your business, Lieutenant Judson?" asked the colonel.

"To present this old gentleman to you."

"You have business with me?" asked the commander.

"I have," replied the old man, with still tremulous voice.

"Be seated, sir." Then resuming his place at the table, and drawing paper, pen and ink before him, as if preparing to write, the colonel asked:

"Your name, sir."

"It is Stephen Loveday, colonel."

"And your residence?"

"Is near Lake Kissimmee."

"Well, go on and state your business with me."

"I will, colonel. It is now nearly a year since my daughter, Jesse was stolen from me by a ruffian called James MacDonald, better known as Black Jim the renegade."

"I have heard of the villain. But go on."

"I made every effort to find my child, but in vain. At length I gave her up as dead. Still, in spite of my better judgment, a father's love has revived a father's hopes many times, and I have dreamed my darling would yet be restored to me."

"I can not see as you have any especial reason to despair. She is probably among the Indians, and I will demand her return."

"Oh! God bless you, colonel. But, I may learn where she is to-night."

"In what manner?"

"I was going to explain. Four days ago I saw a party of the savages pass my cabin. Among their number were many whom I have seen before under the command of Black Jim, and that villain himself. I saw them strike into the military road, and the thought occurred to me that they might be coming here."

"How many were there?"

"About fifty."

"It is not a war-party then?"

"They were not in their war-paint."

"Perhaps the proclamation I issued has had its effect, in spite of the defiant answer that Billy Bowlegs sent me. Was he with the party?"

"I do not know, colonel. I have never seen him to my knowledge."

"Neither have I. He is a strange savage. Always present, but never seen. But, go on with your story."

"Well, sir, it was hard work for the old man to travel twenty-five miles a day, and sleep upon the ground at night in the cold. Of course I dared not build a fire for fear of being discovered. But something nerved me up, and I arrived here as soon as they."

"Where are this party?"

"There are about forty-six or seven of them concealed in the forest upon the opposite side of the river. Three of them crossed in a small canoe. I also succeeded in finding a little boat, and in reaching this side."

"Did you lose sight of the three?"

"I did. But, as I was passing one of the traders' cabins in the settlement, I saw them drinking, within."

"Yes, I understand. These red devils are whisky mad, and must have it at any price. The chief has undoubtedly sent this party forward to purchase it. They will be off soon."

"But my child!" exclaimed the old man.

"Well, what has all this to do with her?"

"Black Jim is one of the three who are drinking at the cabin. Will you not have him arrested and force from him a confession as to what has become of my Jessie?"

"Of course I will. Lieutenant Judson, order out a file of men; arrest the Indians and the notorious Black Jim, and bring them to my quarters at once. I will have the truth from that fellow, or he shall hang."

"Thank you, colonel. If my child can only be found, the old man will bless you forever."

"How old was your daughter?"

"She was but seventeen when she was stolen."

"Well, you may accompany the lieutenant for the purpose of pointing out where these fellows are. We will settle the matter soon."

The officer left the room, followed by Mr. Loveday, and proceeded to detail the guard. As they moved toward the spot, Judson asked :

" Was Jessie your *only* child?"

" My *only* living child."

" Is her mother living?"

" No."

" Did you not have a son by the name of Frederick?"

" Oh! my poor boy, Fred. Did you know him?"

" I knew Fred. Loveday; and as noble a boy he was as ever trod the deck of a warsman."

" But he is gone!"

" Yes, poor Fred. fell, through the treachery of a red-skin."

" Tell me the particulars."

" I know but little of the affair. We were anchored off the Florida coast, when your son, with a party of two others, visited the shore in a small boat. They were captured by a band of savages, and brutally murdered. Their bodies were thrown into the Gulf."

" I have heard this before; but I am glad to meet one who knew my Fred."

" I wonder that you remain in this horrible country, now that you are alone. You have suffered much from the savages."

" True; but it is the spot where rest the remains of my beloved partner, and it seems like hallowed ground. I could not leave it."

" If you find your daughter, would you not leave it for *her* sake?"

" Oh! yes. In that case, I should leave it at once. But we are at the cabin now, and there are the villains."

Judson at once entered with his soldiers, when the party sprung to their feet, and one of them asked, in plain English :

" What means this?"

" James MacDonald, you and your companions are under arrest."

In a few moments they were conveyed to the quarters of Colonel Tazewell.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOST CHILD.

As Judson entered the colonel's apartment with his prisoners, Twiggs raised his eyes, and fixed upon them a withering look. Although there was lightning in that gaze, it did not appear in the least to disturb or disconcert the captives, for they returned the gaze steadily, while a contemptuous curl settled upon their lips. Twiggs saw this, and it rendered him furious. He struck the table, beside which he was sitting, a violent blow with his clenched fist, and exclaimed, in a loud voice:

"Dogs, put less of insolence in your looks, or I will hang you in ten minutes."

"Are you the Od-deen-yo?" asked one of the party.

"What do you mean by Od-deen-yo?"

"Ugh! The white chief of—of these cut-throats." The speaker pointed to the guard, and indicated those without.

"Cut-throats, do you call them? Then I will have them verify your appellation by commencing upon you."

"Are you Colonel Twiggs?"

"I am. What then?"

"Then you are a coward!"

"By heavens!" shrieked the colonel, as he seized his sword and sprung upon the speaker, "I will teach you to apply such language to me." He was about to strike, but, seeing the captive stand with arms folded, and without indicating the slightest fear, he paused. Twiggs was not the man to commit such an act as to cleave down an unarmed prisoner. He gazed upon his captive a moment, and then said:

"I do not care to strike a prisoner. But your insult provoked me, and your manner is insolent."

"I will prove that you are a coward, by your own standard."

"Go on then." He became interested. The speaker's cool audacity had conquered.

"In the first place, you insulted us by your manner; that

called forth the expression upon our faces. You then threatened to hang us. And for what? Because we looked contempt. You insulted a helpless, unarmed prisoner, which none but a coward will do."

Twizel bit his lips in silence, for he well knew this was true. But he added:

"It was the impulse of the moment."

"Was it? Well, let me tell you one thing. Had you and two of your friends been the only party in this room to contend with us, you would not have dared to speak and act as you did. And you must not dare again; for I, at least, am armed with a knife, and I will not brook an insult tamely, even if my life answers for an attempt to resent it. Why were we brought here prisoners?"

"Is your name James MacDonald?"

"It is."

"What were you doing in this settlement?"

"I came to purchase some articles which I needed. But, I take it, we have a right to visit a trading-post without being arrested, or questioned, either."

"How many came with you?"

"You see them all before you."

"You are a liar! There are nearly fifty of your tribe concealed in the woods, opposite the river."

"But they are not in the settlement," was the ready response. "They are simply awaiting, upon the other side, to convey such things as we might purchase to the lake. But how did you know that our warriors were opposite?"

"Do you know that old man?" The colonel pointed to old Mr. Loveday. MacDonald turned, and gazing upon the old man an instant, said, with something like a sneer:

"I think it is my father-in-law."

"Villain!" cried the old man, as he clutched MacDonald by the throat, "where is my child—my poor Jessie?"

"Take your hands off, old man," yelled the renegade. At the same instant he hurled him, with great violence, to the floor. The wretched father received a wound upon the head from which the blood flowed freely, and was otherwise bruised but was not rendered insensible. The villain was immediately seized by the soldiers, and tightly bound.

"Now answer me," exclaimed Twiggs, and there was a meaning in his tone; "where is Jessie Loveday?"

"I know of no such person."

"You stole her from my home, and conveyed her to your tribe," cried the old man, "and, if she is alive, you must know where she is. Oh! tell a wretched father!"

"Had you not better make another attempt to squeeze the information out of my throat?" added the villain.

"I will do that, very soon, if you do not answer," replied Twiggs.

"Oh! I will answer, for it will tickle the old man. Not, sir, because I fear you, even though I am bound."

"Where is my child?"

"At my home, in the Everglades."

"Then she is alive and well?"

"Yes, and happy!"

"Happy! How can she be happy while she is a captive, and away from her poor old father who loves her so much?"

"She is with a husband who loves her and whom she loves. Why should she not be happy?"

"Is she indeed married?"

"She is; I am her husband—that is, we were married according to Indian rites."

"That is no marriage at all. Oh! will you not restore her to me?"

"Couldn't think of it."

"Will you not permit me, then, to go to her and live and die by her side?"

"It would do you no good."

"It would—oh! it would. I will not take her from you, but will teach her to love you even more, if you will be kind to her. And you shall never hear a word of complaint or reproach from my lips. If you knew how much I love my child you would not refuse me. And she is all I have in the world to love. Let me go to her."

"I tell you, old man, it would do you no good. She will not know you."

"What! not know her own father, and so short a time absent? Impossible!"

"And yet I tell you it is so. She is mad!"

"Oh! my God!" groaned the old man.

"Yes, perfectly insane. She knows nothing—cares for nothing but her child."

"Her child! Oh! monster. You have driven her to this!" And the old man fell upon his knees, sobbing as if his heart would break.

"Shouldn't wonder?" was the heartless response.

One of the other captives, when he heard these words, stepped directly in front of MacDonald, and fixed his eyes upon him. He did not speak, but the villain quailed beneath that gaze.

This man was very singular in appearance. He was very large, square built, long arms, head apparently set directly upon the shoulders, dispensing entirely with the neck; in fact, he was an absolute deformity. He appeared to be a half-breed. His dress was a singular mixture of the savage warrior, the hunter and the wrecker. Indeed, he might have been mistaken for one of those vagabond Bahamans. There was nothing about the face, excepting the eyes, which indicated the slightest degree of intelligence.

It was evident that Twiggs interpreted this movement as imposing silence upon MacDonald, for he said:

"Oh! he need not speak further to-night. Sergeant, take that fellow to the shore and lash him to a tree. Place a guard over him also. I think by to-morrow he will be less insolent." MacDonald was taken forth as directed.

"And now, you, sir," continued Twiggs. "What is your name?" He addressed the question to the strange-looking person who had confronted the villain. There was no reply.

"You had better find your tongue, or you shall share MacDonald's punishment." Only a look of scorn answered this.

"Take him away!" cried the colonel. "These savages we of late, been committing the most outrageous depredations, and I am determined to put a stop to them. These fellows shall give me all the information I require, even if I have to wring it from them by torture. You will find your tongue to-morrow, I think."

"I will!" replied the prisoner, in a tone full of meaning.

"I have no doubt of it." And the second prisoner was conveyed to the beach, where he was firmly lashed to a post.

Here he was destined to remain during the remainder of the night, which, considering the cold, was not at all agreeable. The third was now brought up for examination, and proved a little more communicative. But he could not or *would* not speak plain English, and it was only through Lieutenant Judson, who partially understood the Seminole tongue, that his replies were at all intelligible.

"What is your name?" asked Twiggs.

"Ugh!"

"Name! Big chief?"

"Ugh!" repeated the savage, shaking his head. "Name On-yit-ha."

"What is the meaning of that name, Lieutenant Judson?"

"I think, colonel, it signifies *night-hawk*, or *owl*. It does in some of the more northern tribes, and I believe the word is general."

"Where is your chief?"

"Ugh!"

"Big Indian. Big chief. Billy Bowlegs?"

"There. Ugh!" The savage pointed outside.

"Billy must be with the band upon the opposite side of the river," said Twiggs. "If so, it bodes us no good. See that a sharp look-out is kept, and the men in readiness to repel any attack. I will question these fellows more closely to-morrow. I expect a portion of Colonel Taylor's command, to join us in a few days, and then I shall proceed against the Indian stronghold. Question this fellow yourself, and see if you can make any thing out of him." Judson did this, and gleaned the information that the chief in person had come to treat with Twiggs, and that he desired peace, and would use his best endeavors to prevent further outrage. It was the impression, however, that the savage was only feigning his ignorance of the English language, and that he was deceiving. He was therefore secured, and the others retired for the night, after receiving especial instructions as to the guard.

CHAPTER III.

RETALIATION.

IT was some time after midnight before all was again quiet at the fort. The guard had been doubled on the side of the settlement next the river. But, on the sea-side it was deemed unnecessary. It was upon or near the beach, and but a short distance from the works, that the two captives were bound. Two guards were placed over the prisoners, who were not over-vigilant, for reason that the Indian and the renegade were so securely bound. But the American savage is seldom without resources. Nor did this occasion prove an exception.

The four o'clock relief had just passed its rounds, when, to the rear of the fort, a dark object appeared, creeping along with cat-like stealth toward the spot where MacDonalld was bound. Not even the crackling of a twig nor a movement of the stunted canebrake which grew in this place, nor the rolling of a stone, betrayed the presence of any human being to the guard, save the occasional exclamations of rage which burst from the lips of the prisoners. Indeed, there was no occasion for so much caution on the part of any person, as the roar of the waves and the howling of the winds would have deadened any ordinary sound. But extreme cautiousness is characteristic of the Indian; hence, an observer would naturally have supposed this person so stealthily approaching, to be one. At all events, it was easily decided that, whoever it might be, it was not one who belonged in that vicinity.

The figure emerged from the brake and sprung lightly to the side of MacDonalld. The early part of the night was very cloudy, but, although the wind still blew a gale, the clouds at this moment were broken, and the moon shone forth brightly. MacDonalld was soon free, and, in a whisper, said to his deliverer:

" You can not go farther. The space between us and him is too open, and the moon is shining too brightly. You would be detected by the guard, and instantly shot."

"Only two. See! Me fire?" The speaker raised his rifle.

"No. There are others on the fort, within range, and we could not escape." At this moment one of the guards asked:

"Who is there?" At the same time he advanced toward the spot, as if apprehensive that all was not right.

"Where is the canoe?" quickly asked MacDonald.

"Up there!" answered the savage, pointing to the brake, above.

"We can not reach it and must swim for the other side," pointing over the river.

"Ugh! Sharks!"

The coast of Florida is noted for the large number of sharks that are there to be found at almost all seasons of the year. Indeed, it is almost certain death for any person to enter the water, unless it be in the coldest months, when they proceed farther into the depths of the bay. The Indians have a mortal terror of this monster—more so than of the alligator, which infests the shallower lagunes and swamp lakes. But, no time was to be lost. The guard was but a few feet from them. The renegade seized the rifle from the savage, and buried its contents in the breast of the approaching soldier, who fell back, without so much as a groan. MacDonald then sprung into the water, followed by the Indian, and both struck out for the opposite shore, with the skill of expert swimmers.

Of course the report of the rifle gave the alarm, and three or four shots were fired after the two men faintly seen in the water, but to no purpose. The garrison was soon aroused, and a body of men came rushing to the spot where the murder had been committed. Matters were soon explained so far as the facts could be known. It was found that the other prisoner still was secure. He was at once taken before the colonel.

"Villain," exclaimed Twiggs, "you have murdered one of my men."

"I have not," was the sharp response. "I am no murderer!" He spoke like a Roman, in dignity and purity of speech.

"Your companion in villainy did so."

"With that I have nothing to do."

"You have. It is all by your infernal treachery."

BILLY BOWLEGS

"You should leave the country of the Florida. You have no right here."

"How was MacDonald released?"

"You had better ask him."

"Lieutenant Judson, take that fellow out and lash him till he confesses all that he knows about this foul murder. We will learn what it means."

"Colonel Twiggs," exclaimed the prisoner, in a loud and commanding voice, which startled, or at least surprised that officer, "listen to me. You *dare* not condemn me to the lash! You have already tied me to a tree. This indignity was never placed upon me by mortal man before, and it shall not go unavenged now." There was an air about the speaker which astonished all who heard him. His eyes flashed with an unnatural light, and his powerful breast heaved with terrible excitement. He drew a large knife from concealment, and then continued: . . .

"And you have tied *me* to a tree! Who are you? Why, simply an officer in the service of the United States Government—in the pay of my oppressor. And do you know who I am? I will tell you. I am the KING OF FLORIDA! and yet, you *dare* tie *me* to a tree! Down upon your knees, sir! Ask my pardon."

Of course there was no move of this description, and the speaker went on:

"Down upon your knees, sir! You will not? Then I will tell you something more. These lands are mine—all mine! This very fort and settlement stand upon *my* property. I have tolerated you, and permitted you to remain here, even when my warriors and chiefs have opposed it. I have endeavored to prevent outrages, and have punished all those I detected in committing them. I came here for the purpose of renewing my treaty with you; but now, I will not do it. I will never trust you. You tied me, the King of Florida, to a tree, and I will avenge it. Before the sun shines I will lay your settlement in ashes. Remember that, Colonel Twiggs!"

With these words the savage turned and walked deliberately away. Twiggs stood and gazed after him like one thunderstruck. For some moments he did not utter a word, when, as if speaking to himself, he said:

"So, that is the famous Billy Bowlegs, the chief of the Seminoles! Strange I did not know him!"

"Is it your intention that he should escape?" asked an officer.

"Certainly not. Let him be arrested at once."

A guard started in pursuit, but it was too late. The chief was nowhere to be found.

"He will keep his word, colonel with regard to the burning of this settlement, unless the greatest care is taken to prevent it, at once. He will act with celerity, you may rest assured."

"Oh! I have no fears of that. It is for those who reside in the interior that I fear—those who have not the protection of our arms."

"I think you have no occasion for that. Billy is high-minded—that is, for an Indian—and he will direct his vengeance directly against us. That is his way—to strike the strongest."

"I hope it will prove so."

"I have not a doubt of it. Did you not observe the look he gave MacDonald when he was speaking of the maniac girl and her child?"

"I did; but I presumed it was a caution to say no more."

"I thought it so, myself, at that time. But, had I known it was the chief, I should have understood it differently."

"What do you suppose it meant?"

"Well, colonel, I think Billy knew nothing of the circumstances connected with Jessie Loveday, and that he would not, for a moment, protect MacDonald in any of his schemes of villainy. I further believe that he will drive him from the tribe, and restore the girl to her father, could he but understand all the circumstances."

"God grant that he may do so!" exclaimed the old man, who had been listening attentively. "But will not his anger, or his desire for revenge, prevent this now?"

"It is an unfortunate occurrence; still, as I said before, he will direct his vengeance against this especial settlement."

"But he must be aware that I was the one who caused his arrest."

"No, father Loveday, it was not his arrest that you sought, but that of MacDonald. Billy will understand this, and, I

think, fully appreciate your feelings. Look, colonel; you see that he has commenced his work already?"

A stream of fire was seen darting through the air, from the opposite side of the river. It made a beautiful arch in the heavens, and then fell close at the feet of Twiggs. He picked it up, and after an instant of examination, exclaimed:

"It is an arrow. Its head is wrapped with light moss saturated with turpentine and gum"—words scarcely spoken when the whole air appeared to be filled with the flaming messengers. Many of them struck the roofs of the adjoining cabins, some of which were thatched with straw or sea-grass. The best of them were covered only with light pine shingles, and, in less time than it takes to write it, a hundred sheets of flame darted up from the buildings.

"Quick!" cried the colonel, "to the guns of the fort. Pour a shower of canister into the timber across the river. Judson, take a hundred men, and proceed to the river. Give them a dozen rounds, and more, if required. Cook, take another hundred, and assist in subduing the flames."

These commands were rapidly executed. The guns of the fort belched forth their deadly messengers, while the ringing reports of the rifle and musket told of hot work beyond. In the mean time, the flames crackled and roared, and, as the wind was high, they swept from house to house in heedless fury, resisting the combined efforts of citizen and soldier to check them.

Morning at length dawned, and the sun shone upon a sad picture. The little settlement was in ashes, while many a sad mother, with her weeping children clinging to her side in fear and wonder, gazed upon their ruined homes and prospects. Here and there were ghastly forms of those who had seen the sun's last setting, but would never gaze upon it again. The arrow and the rifle of the savage had done a deadly work.

With the coming light the enemy had disappeared. A council of war was called by the commander. In a brief time, a dozen officers were assembled in the fort. It was determined that a pursuit could not be commenced until the arrival of Colonel Taylor's men, as it would be a futile attempt, with so small a band, to pierce the enemy's country.

The old man, Mr. Loveday, sat but a short distance from

the council, awaiting its decision. Upon his face were pictured the emotions which were agitating his soul. Now it was flushed with a crimson hue, as one would advocate an immediate pursuit, and then a deathly pallor would overspread it, as another opposed the same, denouncing it as madness.

The council ended. All had been silent for several moments. A sob and a stifled moan from the old man drew the attention of those around. As they gazed upon him, many a soldier's eye was filled with tears. At this moment Lieutenant Judson arose as if to speak, but he was interrupted by the entrance of a strange-looking person, who advanced, hat in hand, toward the table where the colonel was seated. Every one turned their eyes upon him, and evidently awaited his words, as he had already made three or four efforts to speak. Finally, as he did not succeed, the commander asked, in an encouraging voice :

"Well, my good man, what is your will?"

After bowing half a dozen times, in the most awkward manner, the new-comer pointed to father Loveday.

"Oh! you know the old gentleman?" said the colonel.

The man struck his own breast two or three violent blows, and then wiped one of his eyes with the back of his hand. But a glance revealed the fact that he had but one eye, the other being entirely sightless and nearly closed. He then said :

"Mayhap I do, yer 'onor. There's somethin' in here as tells one-eyed Bob how he *ought* to know him!" And one-eyed Bob, as he termed himself, gave his breast two or three more violent thumps, as if to repress the emotion surging within him.

"So, your name is Robert, is it?" asked Twiggs.

"No, yer 'onor. Bob, one-eyed Bob; that's it an' nothin' else."

"Have you no other appellation?"

"Any what, yer 'onor?"

"Any other name."

"Oh, yes, yer 'onor. Bob Bradley, that's it an' nothin' else!"

"Where do you reside, Mr. Bradley?" Bob scratched his head, looked confused, and then simply exclaimed :

"Eh?"

"Shall I call you Bob?"

"Yes, yer 'onor; that's as how folks alers calls me, an' I don't take ter any other handle."

"Well, Bob, where do you reside—or rather, live?"

"Oh, I live just back a-piece, on the river. I'm a kind o' hunter ginerally. Me an' my wife Nancy, an' my little blind gal Blanche—please yer 'onor, my wife is precious eddicated, an' she got that name out on a book and *would* call her so, although I told her we had better name her Polly. But, howsomever and notwithstanding, if the gal is blind an' got an outlandish name, she's as good an' obedient as ever yer 'onor would wish to meet with, that she is, an' nothin' else."

"Is she safe at home?" asked father Loveday, as he started to his feet.

"Safe! Yes, sir! She's safe with Nancy, an' I'd like to see the rascal, white, black or red, as would lay the weight of his finger on her, that I would an' nothin' else."

"Watch over her, sir. You don't know what it is to lose a child. Watch her, I say!" and the old man's eyes gleamed with tears.

"Well, Bob," continued Twiggs, "what is your business here?"

"Why, ye see, yer 'onor, I heard the shootin' this mornin' an' I see'd the fire, an' I says to Nancy that somethin' was up at the settlement, an' I'd go rite off to see what it was. So I started an' met a party of reds. I knew it was them as did the work. So I watched 'em. They are goin' back to the lake, but they don't go by the road. I know every inch of the woods, an' so I came to say; that if yer 'onor is goin' to chase 'em up, I'm yer man on the trail, an' nothin' else."

"Thank you, Bob; but we have determined not to follow until reënforcements arrive."

"So I heerd at the door, an' I'll tell ye what I want; that is, a lot of powder an' lead. I've got a'most out. An' the reason why I want it is, I'm goin' to foller them reds up; an' what's more, I'm goin' in fur that old man's daughter, or my Nancy won't have a lovin' husband, an' nothin' else."

"It is just what I was about to propose," exclaimed Judson. "In the confusion this morning the Indian who was confined in the guard-room, escaped. He is aware of our

intention to follow as soon as possible. Besides, I think MacDonald will remove the girl to some place of concealment, as I am satisfied that the chief will now interfere with the scoundrel's plans. If you will let me have three men, I will undertake to see that Jessie Loveday is not removed to any place where she can not be found."

"It will be a great risk, Lieutenant Judson."

"I think not. I shall avoid the main body of the Indians. I think we will only have MacDonald and a few of his personal friends to encounter. I shall undertake nothing rash, but wait the approach of yourself and men at Lake Kissimmee after my purpose is accomplished. If, as I fear will be the case, MacDonald should remove her, she might never again be seen."

"As you please. Select your men. It is a mission of mercy which I have no wish to thwart, and I trust, for the old man's sake, you will be successful. Her rescue must now be one of our leading objects."

"You will go with me, Bob?"

"Yes; and there is Charley Morris, as likely a boy as ever walked, will go with us, too. Poor Charley, he's most broke his heart since Jessie was stole away."

"Sergeant Cook and Arthur Allen are the others I shall select. Will you go with me?"

"Most willingly," was the reply, as the men stepped forth.

It was arranged that the forces should set out as soon as the expected reinforcements arrived, and that the first party should notify the troops in case it should be necessary to lay out a different programme from the one already arranged. Father Loveday was to accompany the army.

With a thousand blessings upon their heads, our friends took their departure in pursuit of the foe, and for the rescue of the innocent.

CHAPTER IV THE BLIND CAPTIVE.

MACDONALD and his rescuer soon reached a point of safety. Quickly as possible, they proceeded to the spot where the band was concealed, and communicated to them the condition of affairs. The savages manifested a disposition to rush upon the settlement at once, and it was difficult for MacDonald to hold them in restraint. They proceeded to the bank of the river which separated them from the settlement, and there seated themselves, silently and sullenly looking over the water.

It was not long, however, ere they heard a splashing in the water, and the chief sprung to their side.

"Ah!" he yelled, "you are here in good time. Level those white dogs' cabins to the ground!"

The order was understood, and received with a wild whoop. It was a work of pleasure to them, which long since would have been accomplished had it not been for the restraints put upon them by their chief.

It is strange how such rude and bloodthirsty men can be controlled by a single word, when it comes from their acknowledged head. And never was there a chieftain of the red-man who held a more complete control over his tribe, than did Billy Bowlegs, of the Seminoles. And this man sat gazing upon the devastating flame, while a malicious, almost a demoniac, smile lighted up his face. It soon, however, became necessary for them to seek the shelter of the trees, as the shot from the fort, and the musketry, began to pour in upon them with telling effect. A dozen had been slain or wounded when Billy ordered a retreat, which was pushed forward until the party arrived at the head of Kissimmee Lake, the journey to which was accomplished in three days.

Here a pause was made. Camp-fires were built, and, as the darkness approached, the savages prostrated themselves upon the ground to sleep. The chief sat gazing into the

water, watching the shadow of the fleecy clouds, the moon, the stars, and the red flame of the camp-fires, as they were mirrored in the silvery waters of the lake. Long appeared to be his reverie. At length he said, as if speaking to himself :

"Nothing but the red flame is before my eyes. If I look at a bright star, it hides its face behind a cloud, as if it shrank from my gaze. But that red glare—the clouds do not conceal that—it *will* shine through! But it was *his* fault. I went to treat of peace, and he bound me. This I will not submit to from mortal man. I feel strangely. My heart appears so big, and it aches! I am thinking of *her* to-night, and this I must *not* do. Oh! how vividly does the time come back to me when I was among the civilized, and when a wife used to greet me upon my return from my daily toil. Oh! that sweet face! It sometimes appears to form in those shining clouds, and smile upon me from the lake's reflection. Alas! the curse of being a half-breed! Had it not been for this, the white man never could have torn my loved and once loving wife from my heart and home. But she and the child, which I never saw, are both gone now. For years I have borne this torture of the heart, and I have felt some satisfaction in revenge. But, oh! how small it now appears to me! Revenge! And upon whom? Those who are innocent! My soul sickens at the thought. And yet, I am now bound to this savage race—my destiny is linked to their own, and I must not murmur. One thing I can do, however; I had forgotten it. That old man—his face haunts me. On-yit-ha," he exclaimed, as he roused a sleeper near him, "where is Black Jim?" The question was repeated, as the savage started up, and indicated by a movement that the person sought was to be found near the fire which was burning a little apart from the others, and behind a thick growth of underbrush. Billy walked in that direction, but paused, just as he reached a point where he could hear all the conversation which was taking place. The sound of voices commanded his attention.

"Will not my father come to-night?" asked a soft, sweet voice.

"Not to-night, girl. Don't trouble me."

"Don't trouble you! You speak very strangely to me to-night, dear Edward. Your voice does not sound as it did when you first told me that you loved me."

"When was that?"

"When was that? Oh, dear Edward, your fat gue has made you ill and forgetful. Why, how many times you have spoken of meeting my father and myself at the fort, and of the impression my helpless condition and my beauty, as you termed it, made upon you. And then, dear Edward, that lovely—you said it was lovely—summer night, when you sat beside me upon the mossy bank, and described the scenery around, just as you saw it. And, better than all, you described your own face to me. Oh! how that dear image has been impressed upon me. It was then you told me you would not be ashamed to make me your wife, and take me into the great world. Oh! how your words have been cherished! I should be perfectly happy if I could only see you!" An exclamation was heard by MacDonald, at that moment. He sprung to his feet, and gazed earnestly around; but, hearing nothing further, he again seated himself.

"When will we be to the end of our journey, Edward?" asked the female.

"Not for a week yet. But be quiet. I wish to sleep."

"You are deceiving me. You have spoken to me but a few times for the last few days, and then only in a whisper. You said caution was necessary, because the Indians were near. But, now that you speak in a loud tone of voice, I know that it is *not* the voice of Edward."

"Well, you are right. I am not Edward."

"Who are you, then?"

"I am called Black Jim."

"Oh! that dreadful man!" cried the poor girl. "And why have you brought me here?"

"Well, if you must know the truth of the matter, and I suppose I shall be obliged to tell you some time, I took you to spite your Edward, of whom you think so much, and whom I hate."

The poor creature sat silent for an instant, and then said:

"Heaven will not permit this outrage to go unpunished."

"No! heaven will *not* permit it!" These words were spoken by the chief, as he entered the inclosure.

"What do you mean?" cried MacDonald, starting to his feet, and turning pale.

"That you are a devil incarnate!"

"You dare not interfere with me."

"Little daring there will be about it. What are you doing with that girl?"

"Nothing!"

"Why is she here?"

"She is my captive. I have taken her, and propose to make her my squaw, and, by the laws of our tribe, you dare not prevent me."

"I shall make the effort, at least."

The chief took the girl by the hand, and, in a gentle manner, asked her the particulars of her parents, her name, and capture. Of the latter she knew nothing, further than the fact that she had been met near her own home, by a person whom she supposed to be Lieutenant Judson, who informed her that the army was to move to the lake, that her father had already gone there, and that her mother was a captive, but would be rescued.

"Is it your purpose to convey this blind girl into the Everglades?"

"It is," replied the hardened man.

"And the poor maniac and her child?"

"You may have them, if you like!"

"Yes, I *will* have them, for the purpose of returning them to the poor old man we saw at the fort. And that is not all. I will protect this child."

"I will appeal to the tribe."

"Call them. We will have their decision now."

"No, not until *all* the tribe are together can the decision be made. This is a law you dare not break."

There was some truth in this. Billy had interfered on several occasions of the kind, and, on that account, considerable dissatisfaction was felt. And, in many other things, the chief had opposed the savage appetites of his men, and he felt that opposition to any regularly established usage, with such a man as MacDonald to advocate his own cause, his chance of success was small. And yet he determined to save the two poor creatures whom MacDonald held in his personal power.

CHAPTER V.

MYSTERIES.

THE party who were to start in pursuit of the savages, or rather to watch their movements, first threw aside their uniform, and adopted the dress of hunters. This done, they proceeded on their way. They were joined by Charley Morris in a short time after leaving the fort. He was a young man of more than ordinary manly beauty, but his pale, sad face gave evidence of a heart ill at ease. He was saluted cordially by the party, each one of whom had frequently met him in the forest and at the settlement.

Lieutenant Judson had the command, or rather the direction of the party, while Bob Bradley was to act as guide. The former suggested that Bob should pass his own dwelling in order to take leave of his family, as he might possibly be absent a long time. Old Bob winked, looked very knowing, and said:

"I reckon as how I ain't the only one as wants to see the women-folks. Oh! you nee ln't blush, Mr. Lieutenant. That gal is worth loving if she is blind. But, I'll tell ye what it is. Before ye get hitched, I've got to tell ye a secret about her."

"Can't you tell me now, Bob?"

"No, sir, and for the best reason in the world."

"What is your reason?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I should tell you."

"Yes I would."

"Wal, then, the reason is just because there is one woman in the world who can keep a secret, an' nothin' else." The entire party laughed at this, and Judson said:

"I don't understand you yet, Bob."

"Well, then, it's because I don't know it myself!"

"Then how can you tell me?"

"Oh, my wi—Nancy has got it, and she says she will tell it to me at the right time; and I know she will, for she always tells the truth. And she says you have got to know it."

"Then you have no idea what it is?"

"Oh, yes, I have some idea, and that's about all. But stop!" The speaker started back, and the crimson mounted to his bronzed features, as he gazed through the forest.

"What is the matter, Bob?" asked Judson.

"Don't you see nothing there?" The hunter pointed forward.

"I see nothing."

"Injuns."

"Are there Indians ahead?"

"They have been there, at my cabin. Don't you see it is in flames?" Without further words Bradley bounded forward, followed by his friends.

It was but a few moments before they arrived full in sight of the burning dwelling. Bradley had already reached it, and was bending over the prostrate form of a female, who was stretched upon the turf, a short distance from the flaming mass. He was beating his breast and moaning in the most pitiful manner.

Judson, at a glance, saw that it was the mother of Blanche, and it was painfully evident that she would live but a few moments longer. His next thought was of his own blind girl. He searched around, calling loudly upon her name, but there was no response save the dead echo which came back through the forest. He now heard his name called, and he hastened to the dying woman and knelt beside her. He saw that the wound was upon the neck, and that she was sinking from loss of blood. She could speak with difficulty, and turning to Judson, she said:

"You love my poor child, don't you?"

"Oh! God knows my heart, I love her. My present agony attests this. But, where is she?" The dying mother pointed in the direction of the lake.

"In the hands of the Indians?"

"Worse!"

"Not dead?"

"No. She is in the hands of James MacDonald!"

"But she shall be rescued, I swear it!" cried Judson, in frantic tones.

"She wishes to speak further to you, Lieutenant," said Morris, as he called his attention to a sign from her.

"Raise me. I can not breathe!" Old Bradley raised her in his arms, and placed her in a sitting posture, and she continued:

"Judson, under a slab of granite by the side of the oak-tree yonder, you will find a box. It contains a secret which you must learn before you wed my child. And, oh! I beg of you not to discard her. She is pure and innocent. I am—oh!" and the poor mother fell back a corpse.

It was some moments before a word was spoken. But at length Judson exclaimed:

"Our presence here can avail little now. We must act promptly. Let us send the body to the fort for interment, and then continue our journey."

"No," exclaimed Bradley. "She wanted to be buried by the side of the river."

"Well, let it be so." In a short time the rude burial was over, and the party were about to set forward.

"You forget the box, lieutenant," said Morris.

"I did forget it. But no matter; another time will do as well."

"But you may never visit this spot again. We are now bent upon a desperate undertaking, in which it is not impossible you might lose your life. And perhaps this secret confided to you by the dying woman may be for the future welfare of Blanche, and should not be given to another except through you."

"True, I will secure the box." This was soon done. Judson opened it, and found that it contained nothing but a carefully folded paper. He placed this in his breast without so much as even glancing at its contents.

"Would it not be well to read it now?" asked Morris.

"No. There is an indorsement upon it to the effect that the secret is only for me; and I have no desire to learn the contents of the paper until I can secure the safety of her to whom the paper refers. Oh! Blanche, poor child—poor blind bird, what will be her fate?" Judson bowed his head, while his frame trembled with the intensity of his feelings. In a moment he said:

"Excuse me, Morris. Do not think that I am childish."

"No. You feel as becomes a noble heart."

"And yet I can but cry like a baby."

"No. Say rather that you weep like a man.

"As you please to term it. Morris, you can not dream how I love that poor blind girl. To me she is the embodiment of all that is lovely and pure; ay, it seems to me that heaven never painted so fair, or formed so gentle a being. Why, I have sat beside her for hours listening to her voice, until lost in reverie—enchanted by its tones, I have dreamed a thousand angels were warbling their heavenly anthems by my side. And when, with such confiding fondness, she would rest her head upon my breast, the joy that filled my heart was perfect, and I inwardly thanked heaven for sending me such a prize. Is it strange to you that a soldier could thus love?"

"No. She is a being to love. But have you never felt regrets with regard to her great misfortune?"

"You refer to her loss of sight?"

"Of course."

"The only regret I ever felt, was on her own account. If she had the blessings of sight, it is true she would enjoy a greater degree of pleasure in gazing upon the beauties of life, but it might divide the heart. I think she loves me better, and is much happier in that love, from the fact that she is entirely dependent upon that love for her happiness."

"No doubt this is true to some extent. But, do you know in what manner she became deprived of sight?"

"I do not. This, also, is a secret I am to learn some day."

"Well, Judson, you have much cause for anxiety—great anxiety; but your case is not altogether hopeless, like my own."

"You refer to Jessie Loveday?"

"Yes, I think I loved her as truly as mortal can love. When she was stolen from me, it almost killed me. Night and day I passed in searching for her, but to no purpose. I became satisfied, however, that she was a prisoner in the Everglades. A hundred times have I made a circuit of Lake Kissimme, calling upon her name, even when my own judgment told me she could not be near. But it was upon this lake I last saw her, and it appeared to me like an enchanted place. It almost maddened me as I gazed upon each familiar spot. Here was

the mossy bank beneath the great oak where we had so often sat, but she was not there! Here was the rippling streamlet beside which we had so often wandered, listening to its soft music, which now appeared to me like her funeral dirge. Here was her mother's grave, over which we knelt, asking that mother's pure spirit to listen to us and bless us, as we spoke of endless love, and plighted, each to the other, our first vows. But Jessie was not with me, and, in my soul's anguish I almost wished that she was lying beneath the sod, and I beside her!"

"She has been absent nearly a year. Have you never received the slightest information of her?"

"Never. I have passed up and down the river a dozen times, and into Lake Okeechobee, which I have also explored in every part. I also penetrated the Everglades until I came upon the Indian stronghold."

"And you saw nothing—no signs of Jessie?"

"No. But I saw that which almost froze my blood within me."

"What was it?"

"I will tell you--that is, so far as I know. I found great difficulty in forcing my way through the swamps. There were numerous narrow, well-beaten paths. But these it was necessary for me to avoid, as there were frequent parties of the Indians passing from their stronghold to the lake, and back again. In the more marshy places, I encountered alligators, and poisonous reptiles; but it was for her I lived better than life that I was toiling, and I thought not of danger. I felt my worst enemy to be the savage who had stolen my Jessie."

"Do you not know that the abductor was a white man?"

"Yes; the renegade, Black Jim. I know it well. I never saw him but once, but his image is fixed as with a brand of fire upon my memory, and I feel that we shall some day meet."

"Well, go on with your narrative."

"At length, bursting through a wall of brake, I came suddenly in sight of the Indian village. It was a strange place. Surrounding a comparatively open space, or sparsely timbered lawn, were rows of wigwams, in large numbers, and warlors

In size and pattern. Some of them were formed of blankets or skins, others of cane and young saplings, while others, still, were built of logs, and were quite large, running at angles, with a length perhaps of forty feet, and a height of eight or ten. These buildings were mostly ranged at the outer edge of the circle, and appeared to be intended for the double purpose of dwelling and defensive works. At the western portion of the settlement, was situated what, to me, appeared to be a break of nature. It was a range of sharp, ragged cliffs, over which I could plainly see, and distinctly hear, the living streams of water, as they came dashing over the sides of this elevation.

"To this place I bent my steps, and ascended to the highest peak. It was, indeed, a wild spot. The range of hills, which were very much broken, extended several miles toward the west. Below me, and all around, lay the monotonous Everglades, and far beyond I could see the deep blue of the ocean. At a little distance was the lake, and the winding river, like a thread of silver, presenting a picture long to be remembered. But, at the base of this ridge, directly at my feet, my greatest interest was centered. Here I could see the rude wigwams, the smoke curling up, as if to overcast and eclipse some of this rare beauty. It seemed to settle around my soul, for the gloom there was of the densest kind.

"Was it possible that she—my Jessie—was a prisoner *there*? And would some kind spirit whisper to her that I was near? My heart did not fail me, though, for a moment, my strength did, and I sank to the earth. I soon recovered. Hope nerved me, and I determined to continue my search, fully and unflinchingly.

"I commenced my descent of the hill, or, rather, series of rocky ledges. I had proceeded perhaps two hundred yards, when I found myself upon a kind of flat, which overlooked the village below. At a glance, I discovered that the spot contained several wigwams, and one large log-cabin, similar in build to those below. I saw a human figure seated near this latter building, with the head bent low, resting upon the hands. I instantly sprung behind a jutting rock, and, as I thought, escaped observation. I then turned to look at the object, for its very appearance had excited my curiosity. A

I peered over the rock, I saw that the figure had raised its head, and was gazing toward me. My very blood ran cold."

"It was a human being, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps some poor captive?"

"This is my opinion."

"Well, go on."

"I will describe it, if I can. It was indeed the form of a man; and yet unlike one. Upon his person were a few tattered and filthy rags; his hair was long, and hung in straggling, matted knots over his shoulders; his beard was of the same ragged appearance, and his eyes so haggard, sunken and bloodshot, that I shrunk almost in terror from their gaze. He swayed to and fro, making a kind of guttural sound, which, together with his wild appearance, convinced me that he was not only a prisoner, but a maniac.

"My first impulse was to rush from my concealment, and release the captive, for such I felt he must be, as I saw that his ankle was bound with an iron fetter, and, with a chain, was attached to one of the logs forming the cabin. I did so far leave my place of concealment that the wretched man saw me, and, with a cry wild and terrible, he sprung to his feet. His chains rattled, and the sound chilled me. What strange mystery could be connected with this wretched prisoner?"

"At this moment I felt a sharp twinge near my temple. An arrow glided past. I placed my hand to my head, and found that the blood had started, and was trickling down my face. Instinctively I stepped again behind the rock for protection. The man saw that I had been discovered by some of the savages, for two more arrows had fallen upon the spot where I had been standing. He asked, in a voice which thrilled me

"Are you alone?"

"I am!" I replied.

"Then, run for your life! To remain here is madness."

"But I can not leave you to suffer thus!" I cried.

"Your stay would but tighten my chains. You have penetrated a spot never trod by a white man before, unless he was a captive. Go, bring friends—hundreds of friends. Do not pause. It will only be to murder me and yourself. Go,

and you can return as a guide. An instant more, and you are lost! Go, *Charles Morris!*"

"He called you by name?"

"Yes. I had already commenced a rapid retreat when I heard my own name spoken. I paused, to question the wretched man further, bat down among the rocks I saw the forms of a number of the savage tribe, and I heard their yells o' rage. I knew I could not contend with them for an instant, and so I darted forward. For many miles the pursuit was kept up. But at last I reached the lake, and springing into a canoe which I found upon the shore, I effected my escape."

"Have you no idea who the person was who knew you, and addressed you by your name?"

"Not the least."

"You could neither recognize the features nor the voice?"

"Neither. The appearance of the man was so utterly wretched, that I do not suppose there is a vestige of his former self left, and the voice sounded more like the echo of a clod upon a coffin-lid, than any thing human."

"When did this occur?"

"Only six days since!"

"So recently?"

"Yes. I have just returned from the Everglades."

"Have you yet taken any action in the matter?"

"Yes. I have communicated all the particulars to Colonel Twiggs. I am to meet the army at Lake Kissiminee, and lead them against the savages."

"Did you see old Mr. Loveday at the fort?"

"I did. And I also learned from him that MacDonald had actually been a prisoner at the fort, but had escaped. Oh! if I could have met him there!"

"Did you learn nothing more with regard to Jessie?"

"Nothing, save that she was supposed still to be in the Everglades."

"Nothing further?"

"No. Why? Is there any further information with regard to her?"

"No—no."

"If there is, in heaven's name let me know it!"

"Simply the certainty that she *is* there; and alive."

"Then she will soon be free. Come. Now let us forward to the lake, and see if any thing can be done for the poor captives."

Old Bradley, during this conversation, had been seated beside the new-made grave. Entirely indifferent to all that was passing around, he was bending forward, and big tears watered the fresh earth. He was at length aroused by the voice of Judson.

"Come, Bob. We have work before us. Your child?"

The old man sprung to his feet, and gazed wildly around, as if vainly endeavoring to collect his scattered thoughts. But his eyes fell upon the smoldering embers of what had so recently been his happy home, and he exclaimed :

"Oh! my God! I *did* hope it was some horrid dream from which I should wake. But I think I am awake now and there it is, still before me, in all its dreadful reality. Mi Judson, you mustn't blame poor old Bob if he does weep, but there's such a load *here*, I can't help it!" and the old man clutched wildly at his breast, as if he would tear the heart from its place.

"There is but one thing left," exclaimed Judson, with an earnestness almost startling, "and that is, leaving the dead behind, to save the living; and then for revenge—extermination! Here, friends, this sod is wet. It covers a clay that but an hour since was the inmate of a pleasant home. Kneel with me, here, upon this earth, and swear by that pure soul, never to rest until this barbarous tribe have been exterminated, or the race swept from the country!" In an instant the entire party were bending beside Judson, with their hands raised to heaven, with the exception of old Bob. He stood a little apart, and as he saw the arms extended, and the oath about to be registered, he laid his hand upon the shoulder of Judson, and exclaimed :

"Stop! That is an oath we have no right to take!"

"But our wrongs and sufferings!" said Judson.

"Are very great. Yet we must not take upon ourselves the work that belongs to Him. But swear to bring the guilty to justice and to punishment."

"Are they not all guilty?"

"No. You may think I speak strangely; but take the oath I suggest."

"We do," was the response.

"Now let us forward. Judson, when I can explain the mystery connected with that grave, or, at least, *my* part of it, you will understand me better!" The apparently ignorant and rude man talked like one different from the character played by old Bradley.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SURPRISE.

Not more than two hours after the departure of our friends from the fort, the look-out from the fort gave notice that a fleet was coming up the bay. All was joy within the circle of the ruined settlement at this announcement. Their situation had been considered dangerous for some time past, and, after the disaster of that morning, nothing could be more welcome than reinforcements and fresh supplies.

And many there were who were eager to march against the foe. With the additional force they were to receive, success could but crown the attempt which was to be made to dislodge the implacable, relentless savages.

Soon the vessels bearing the fresh troops were moored beside the fort pier, and the disembarkation commenced, amid the cheering of the soldiers as well as citizens. Matters were soon explained. It required but a few hours to get every thing in readiness for a move. By noon the troops who were to participate in the expedition, were drawn up in line. There were at least five hundred of them—brave, hardy-looking men as ever fought beneath the starry flag. And this body of men were to be commanded, in their hazardous undertaking, by Colonel Zachary Taylor. Twiggs was to remain still in command of the fort, which retained a garrison sufficiently strong to hold it.

Taylor and Twiggs! What the different history of these men? We find the former leading a devoted band amid tho

wilds of Florida, against a wily savage and his fierce warriors, in 1840. In 1846-7 he again heads a brave army in Mexico, and, knowing "no such word as surrender," conquers a peace. And again, in 1849, he heads a mighty nation, its chosen chief. Honored he lived--beloved he died--his memory enshrined in millions of patriotic hearts--living "when marble monuments decay." God send us such another man, when the time of need comes! And yet, I fear "we shall not look upon his like again"--so simple, and yet so great--so firm, and yet so mild--so severe, and yet so generous.

But the other! Sympathy would drop a tear--Charity would drop the vail--Justice, tempered with mercy, will permit the misguided and his faults to rest together, side by side, within the grave--whether he passed just in time to save his name from the madness of having drawn his sword against his honored flag.

Colonel Taylor learned all the particulars with regard to the stronghold of the enemy in the Everglades, and was informed that he would be joined by Charles Morris at the head of the lake, who would act as a guide. The wagon train was in readiness, and among other things were a number of boats, which were to be used, by a portion of the army, for crossing the lakes and descending the river, and for the transportation of supplies, as this could not well be done by the train, further than the road had already been opened.

It was about two o'clock when the little army took up its march.

Just as the sun was sinking, on the third day, the scouts, which were always in the advance, returned, and reported a body of savages, evidently encamped for the night, on the margin of the lake. They appeared to be entirely at their ease, and unconscious of danger. The army was immediately halted, and preparation made for a surprise.

"Have they canoes on the lake?" asked the commander.

"I could not tell. I simply saw their camp-fires, and one or two sleeping Indians, when I returned to warn you, lest the rumbling of the wagons should alarm them."

"You did well. I will myself go forward and reconnoiter."

"No use in that, yer 'onor," exclaimed old Bob, who came up at this moment. "I've got the soundin's right as a trivet,

and ef you'll let me giv' ye a little bit of directions, ye can trap the whole crew, just as slick as ever a cat catched a mouse."

"Who are you?" asked the colonel.

"Only one-eyed Bob. Reckon Colonel Twiggs spoke to you 'bout me."

"Yes, I recollect. Well, what is your plan?"

"Well, jest send a hundred of the boys down the lake about a mile, another hundred up the lake, about the same distance. Then take another hundred an' let them carry them boats only a little distance, and I'll show them where there's a small stream that empties into the lake. Let 'em run down it, embark, an' cut off the retreat by the water. Then we will all advance at once, and the reds will find themselves cut off on all sides."

"How many of the savages are there?"

"I should say not over sixty at the most."

"Your plan is a good one, and shall be carried out. You may accompany the party with the boats."

"Yes, colonel. But there's one thing I wish you would do."

"What is that, my friend?

"Give orders to the men not to fire, without they are absolutely compelled to do so."

"Why do you make this request?"

"Because my child—my poor little blind Blanche, is a prisoner with them, and I fear you might injure her."

"It shall be as you wish." The commander now gave the necessary instructions, and the three parties set off, while a fourth remained behind ready to advance at the proper time. It was agreed, that in one hour the encircling parties should begin to concentrate, as this would be sufficient time for each one to reach the desired position.

Father Loveday remained with the colonel's party. He had made inquiry of Bob with regard to Lieutenant Judson, Charles Morris, and their friends, and learned that they had all separated as they neared the lake, and were probably near at hand.

The appointed time for the advance arrived. Cautiously the troops moved forward from their various points. The

movements were so slow that nearly another hour elapsed before the rear party came in sight of the camp-fires. As they drew near, they saw that the savages had already been alarmed by the approach of the boats upon the lake, and were crouching behind the trees, watching them. They did not see that they were being closed in upon to the right, left and rear, so intent were they upon the party in the boats.

The boats had arrived to within a distance of forty yards from the shore, when a stream of fire shot out from among the trees, followed by the sharp report of the Indian rifle. This was quite unexpected to the commander. By the clear moonlight he saw a number of his men who occupied the boats, leap into the air, and then pitch headlong into the water. This was more than he could bear, and he cried out:

"Fire upon them, men—give them one volley, and then the bayonet." Another sheet of flame and a deafening report followed this command, and with the most unearthly yells, of terror, rage and pain, the savages turned to find themselves hemmed in upon every side. Some few of them leaped into the water, but were soon dispatched, or seized by those in the boats.

The Indians, finding themselves so closely pressed on every side by the glittering bayonets in the hands of determined men, with a few exceptions, threw down their arms in token of surrender. But those few fought with the desperation of madness, and not until they were literally hewed in pieces, or picketed with the bayonet, did they cease their frantic efforts.

During this time there had been a voice heard, high above the din of battle, urging the warriors to continue their efforts and yield only to death. But no force could stand against such odds.

When quiet was restored, the colonel advanced and asked "Where is the chief?"

"He is here!" exclaimed the well-known voice of Bill Bowlegs, as he stepped from behind a large tree.

Colonel Taylor had met this chieftain before in battle, but had never been in a position to examine his features or general appearance. There was a look of astonishment upon his face as he asked:

"Are you the celebrated Florida chief?"

"I am chief of the Seminoles. What is your will?"

"That you throw down your arms and surrender."

"Surrender! Me, the King of Florida, surrender! Colonel Taylor, do you see those dead bodies? They were my *braves*. They *died* fighting! They chose *death* rather than surrender to the usurper! The *brave* would *not* surrender! Think you the *chief* will not imitate their example?"

"And you will not surrender?"

"Never!"—and Billy raised his tomahawk high in the air.

"Seize him," cried the colonel. A number of soldiers sprung forward to do this, but quick as thought Billy hurled his weapon at the head of the commander, and with a single bound dashed through the lines.

It proved very fortunate for the colonel that a young sapling intervened between him and the infuriated chief, for the tomahawk, striking a limb, glanced a trifle from its destined course, and fell harmless to the ground, far beyond him. The movement, too, upon the part of the savage, was so unexpected, that he had cleared the circle before any person had time even to put forth the slightest effort to prevent his escape in the jungles around them.

"Fire upon him," yelled the commander. A volley went rattling through the oaks and smaller trees. The chief was seen to spring into the air, and clasp his hand upon his side as if hurt, but he paused not, and in a moment more was lost to view. An examination of the earth in the direction he had taken, proved that he had been wounded, bat to what extent no one knew.

And, indeed, it was hoped that his wound would not prove mortal, because Billy was, in reality, a humane chief. In case of his death, it was feared the command would fall upon MacDonald, who had much influence with the tribe. He was a merciless villain, and had exhibited the most intense hatred of the white race, of which he was himself a renegade and outcast.

A search was now made for Blanche. Loudly did poor old Bob call upon her name, but he received no answer.

"Oh, my God! If she has been shot it will complete my misery," said the old man, as he searched around. But not

a trace of her, or of MacDonald, could be found. It was not likely that they would separate from the main party—certainly not before they reached the lake. If not, they could not then be far distant. He proceeded to the margin of the waters, and called in his loudest tones. Once he thought he heard a faint echo borne upon the breeze; but his repeated calls failed to elicit any thing definite.

At length, he returned to the party, who were evidently preparing for a night's rest.

"Perhaps," said the old man to the commander, "there are some of the Indians who can speak English, and may give us some information." Such a one was soon found.

"Where is Black MacDonald?" asked the colonel, of On-yit-ha, or Night-hawk.

"Ugh! There!" The savage pointed to the spot where the renegade and his captive had been seated when interrupted by the approach of the chief. An examination was made at once. There were the delicate footprints, and the fire beside which they had been seated was yet burning. Poor Blanche! She had been so nearly rescued, and yet was a prisoner. It was a torturing thought, whose agony was plainly written upon old Bradley's face. The rude soldiers around were affected deeply by the old man's sorrow.

The two soldiers, who had accompanied the advance party, now came up, having been attracted by the firing.

"Have you seen Lieutenant Judson, or Charles Morris?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Not since we parted at twilight."

"They went down the lake, did they not?"

"Yes."

"Both together?"

"No; Judson took a small canoe, but intended keeping close to the shore, while Morris was to travel by land."

"Were they to return here?"

"Yes, at daylight, if they found nothing."

"Well, there is yet hope, for I know that Judson will put forth every effort for the rescue of my child. But to-morrow will bring news of them, and, I doubt not, more work. So we will rest to-night."

The bivouac was soon made, and, ere long, the tired troops

slept. But old Bob did not. His mind was too much disturbed, and his heart too full, to permit forgetfulness in slumber; and so the night passed—each hour one of repose to the sleepers, but, to the distressed old man, each minute was but sixty seconds of torture.

CHAPTER VII!

"HERE, FATHER!"

AFTER our friends had left the grave of the murdered woman, they pushed rapidly forward toward the lake, only pausing for rest and refreshments. It was late in the afternoon of the third day, when old Bob announced that they were only a short distance from the lake. A consultation was held. It was not even supposed that this party could effect a rescue. Their intention was to track the foe, and furnish such information as would enable the troops to make a successful attack when they came up.

There could scarcely be any danger anticipated by the savages; still, it was thought that, with their usual precaution, they would be likely to encamp in some retired spot. It was, therefore, determined to wait until darkness should set in, and then commence the search.

Judson and Morris took a lower route, followed by one of the soldiers, while old Bob and the other soldier took the upper one. In a short time they reached the lake. By chance Judson found a canoe. He was satisfied, by the model of the same, that it belonged to some settler, and not to any of the Indians. He sprung into it, saying:

"I will push out a short distance, and see if there are any camp-fires visible. Wait here a moment, until I return."

In a short time the boat glided noiselessly back to the land, and Judson said:

"A mile above, and about two miles below, there are fires."

"Those above are most likely to be the ones we want."

"Why so?"

"Because they are directly in the path taken by the savages."

"I think differently. The one above is too near the lake. They are fishermen. That down, is a little distance back in the forest, and not so distinct."

"At all events, Bob is in that direction, and will attend to them. We will go below. What is your plan?"

"Let the soldiers join Bob above. I will pull carefully along the margin of the lake, while you may keep in the timber. If we should be separated, remember, we must meet in two or three hours on the road, and sooner, if we get the information we want; for, if Colonel Taylor arrived the day we left, as they expected, he will be at the lake by midnight, if not before."

"Well, go on; but look out for yourself; for the moon is shining brightly, and any person can see a long distance upon the water--more especially those savages, with their practiced eyes."

"Remember the meeting." And Judson left the shore.

He pulled cautiously along, and arrived at a point opposite the lower fire. He soon discovered what it was. A large stream of water here emptied into the lake. A fire was burning upon its bank, and some men and women were engaged in fishing. After becoming fully convinced that they were friends, he approached. They were not a little startled when they heard theplash of oars and saw the approaching canoe. But they were reassured as they discovered there was but one person, a white man, in it. Judson pulled close to the party, who eyed him a moment, and then one of them said:

"Confound it, stranger, ye e'na'most sheer'd the life out on a feller."

"I was not aware of having done any thing to frighten yu, my friends. I simply saw you from the lake, and came up for the purpose of gleaning some information if possible."

"Confound it, wife; he's one of them nice-spoken chaps as you sees down to the fort. Shouldn't be surprised ef he was a sojer."

"I am an officer under colonel Taylor," replied Judson.

"Want to know! Wal, we're right down glad to see y^{ou}. Won't ye jist step on shore and take a nip? I've got a bott' of the rale old slingo here."

"Thank you, not to-night. I am glad to propose the toast : 'Ladies an' gentlemen, your health!'"

"Alers do it at the fort," said the fisherman, with a wink and a knowing nod to those around him. Then he continued :

"Stranger, I like you, and shall be glad to give ye good grub in the morning, for you're goin' to hang out on a peg with us to-night, I reckon."

"No, I thank you. I have work before me to-night."

"Want to know! May I ax what kind o' work you wrought hev?"

"Certainly. I am upon the track of a band of Indians."

"Huntin' Injins, hev? Wal, I reckon ye ain't a duin' it all alone, be ye?"

"There are five of us who are tracking the savages. But I expect colonel Taylor, with an army of at least five hundred men, down to join us to-night."

"Hoora! That's the talk. Here, wife, get me my gun, for by the great lizards I'm goin' to jine 'em. A chance to hunt the varmints, in good company, don't come every day, and I'm in for a scrimmage to wipe out old scores, curse em!"

"You may be useful as a guide," replied Judson, not noticing the earnestness of the man, whose last words were uttered with terrible fierceness.

"Yis, an' ef I can't get our little Willie back, I'll hev the satisfaction of helpin' to clear 'em out, any way. Five hundred! Hoora! Hoora!"

"Your little Willie! What do you mean?" asked Judson.

"Wal, Gin'r'al, ye see that gal, thar'? Wal, she's my wife, an' about two year ago, she had one of the cutest little cusses—a baby, I mean—looked jes' like me, did'nt it wise?—that ye ever did see. Wal, ye see, the bigger it grew, the more store we set by the little critter. But, about a year ago, a party o' the reds were goin' past here, when they picked up the boy, an' toted him off—no one knows whar'. It e'en'smost killed my wife, Sally, there; but we had to b'ar it. It war' harder'n havin' our own ha'r raised."

"And you have never heard any thing of the child?"

"Not a whimper. I s'pect the little thing's dead before this time. But, if I can get only one shot at—what's that?"

A short distance from the spot where they were standing, was heard a shot—a scream, being evidently that of a female, and a voice calling:

"Judson! Judson!"

"Come! Quick! Follow me!" cried Edward, as he bounded into the forest.

With the speed of the wind, he ran for the spot from whence he had heard the sounds proceeding, answering the calls. One better acquainted with the Indian character would not have done this. It proved unfortunate; for, just as he broke through a thicket, he received a blow upon the head which sent him reeling and senseless to the earth.

We will return, for a few moments, to MacDonald.

After the conversation, which we have already narrated, had occurred between him and the chief, with reference to the blind girl and the maniac, the latter left the circle, fully resolved to liberate them, while the former was more than ever resolved that it should not be done.

MacDonald's daring nature loved opposition. He was quite a favorite with the tribe, on account of his courage—for the savage is apt to mistake deeds of barbarism for those of heroism; and, in the present case, he did not fear the result of the tribe's decision, whether or not he should retain the maidens, who were his lawful captives. Still, he could not but feel ill at ease. He knew the disposition of the chief, and that, when he had once resolved a thing, it was almost as good as done. He therefore determined that he would proceed at once to the stronghold.

Taking Blanche by the hand, he led her to a distant part of the camp, and arousing four of the sleepers—those who 'ere the most devoted to him—communicated to them his intentions. At first, they grumbled at being disturbed; but the promise of a large amount of whisky had the desired effect, and they followed the renegade.

Blanche had become too much fatigued to walk, and a rude litter was formed, upon which she was carried.

"It is but three miles to the house of old Bill Silly. We can get a boat there. It is true, I would rather avoid his house, for certain reasons of my own; but it is the only way.

Once in the boat, our journey will be easy the balance of the distance."

Poor Blanche, in spite of her anguish of mind, had—overcome so entirely as she was by fatigue—fallen asleep. The party kept on their way, and at length arrived near the spot where the conversation occurred between the fisherman and Judson.

Upon a sudden, they came upon Charles Morris. Neither saw the others until they were but a few feet apart. Quick as thought, Morris raised his rifle. He comprehended at a glance the condition of affairs. But he mistook his man. He had intended to kill MacDonald, but, fortunately for the villain, he had just relieved one of the Indians at the litter, who was walking in the advance. The savage, therefore, received the contents of Morris' rifle in his breast, and, with a groan, fell to the earth. At the same time, Morris called loudly for Judson, whom he supposed to be near. Blanche was aroused by the shot, and gave vent to a scream of terror. But MacDonald was not to be so easily foiled. He had now only one adversary to encounter, who held an unloaded gun. A second report soon followed, and Morris fell to the ground.

These were the sounds heard by Judson, and, dashing forward, he arrived at the spot just as his friend had fallen, and himself receiving a blow which deprived him of consciousness.

MacDonald bent close to the face of the fallen men, and examined each. He then said, in a low tone, and with much bitterness: . . .

"It is Judson, as I expected, but he is only stunned by the blow. Oh! I will have rare sport. I will repay him for tying me to a tree. And this other poor devil—if I remember him rightly, he is the—or *was*, the lover of Jessie. I'd like to see him squirm; but he's dead. Here, boys, take up this man, and bring him along."

The Indians did as directed. Blanche was led forward, and the party soon stood upon the spot where Judson had met the fishermen. The latter, fearing that the savages were approaching in large numbers, had deemed it prudent to withdraw. Nothing stood in the way.

Judson, still insensible, was placed in a boat. Blanche was

also led into it. The renegade and the three remaining savages sprung in, and pulled rapidly for the middle of the lake.

"Blanche, do you hear that?" asked MacDonald.

"I hear the report of fire-arms," answered the girl, in timid tones.

"Do you not see the flames and smoke?"

"Why do you mock me, sir? You know I can not see?"

"Oh, yes. I had forgotten. But, listen! There are three distinct volleys. Is it not a heavenly sound?"

"To me it is one of terror."

"Do you know what it means?"

"I can't even guess."

"Those sounds are from the spot we have just left. They are your friends; and, poor fools, they think to find you here."

"Why are you so cruel as to take me from them?"

"Well, if you must know, it is because I wish to be revenged upon your friends and your Mr. Judson, the soldier-swain who loves to tie those he don't fancy up to whipping-posts."

"Judson? Do you mean Edward Judson?"

"Yes; *Edward* Judson. Would you not love to see him?"

"I would love to hear his voice once again."

"Well, be a good girl, and you *shall* hear his voice in a few hours. Do you hear that voice?"

"It is calling me by name! I heard it distinctly!"

"Yes. Do you recognize the tones?"

"It is my father's voice." And Blanche arose, and with all her strength, answered the call. The words, "Here, father!" rang out over the water in tones of commingled despair and joy.

"It is useless," said MacDonald, with a laugh. "You will never see your father again!"

"Never hear his voice again! Never feel his fond caress again!"

"Never feel old Bob Bradley's paws again."

"And my mother?"

"She is dead, and old Bob is a widower. He is one eyed now, sure," and the heartless wretch chuckled over his supposed witicism.

"Oh! heaven help me," sobbed Blanche, as she sunk back into her seat.

"Blanche! Blanche!" called Judson, as he returned to half-consciousness. "Blanche, where are you—where am I?"

"Oh! here, Edward, here," cried the poor girl, as she recognized the voice, and sprang to her feet.

"Closer, Blanche! closer! I am cold. I—I—" and Judson fell back again, unconscious. The poor blind girl had tottered forward, and fell, fainting, upon the body of her lover.

The renegade looked on, while a smile of gratified revenge lighted up his hideous face.

Into such inhuman shape is human nature sometimes warped by men's own passions and evil circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRONGHOLD.

WHEN the morning broke, it was clear and beautiful. Judson had recovered his reason, but was still lying prostrate and almost helpless, in the bow of the boat. Blanche had been separated from her friend, and placed in the stern of the little craft, where, sobbing, she had fallen into a fitful slumber.

She saw not the bright sun. At her waking she could *feel* its genial glow, but the beauty of its light was forever shut out from her. Its golden reflection in the sparkling waters, its lovely tints upon the forest oaks and its painting of each shrub, were lost to her sightless orbs, and evermore must be. Oh! to have earth's beauty and glow shut forever from our gaze! It must be like a body animate buried in a death-vault.

Judson saw its glories, and, raising himself upon his elbow he gazed long upon them. And then, as if giving utterance to his thoughts, he said:

"How fair is every thing here!"

"Yes, it is a fine prospect—one that I like!" Judson turned his eyes upon the speaker, and simply exclaimed:

"MacDonald!"

“BILLY BOWLEGS

“Yes. Black Jim MacDonald. Oh! you needn’t frown so, nor don’t go off in a fainting-fit again, as you did last night, because I want you to keep awake. You had *your* turn a few days ago, and you tied me to a post. I’ll have my turn now”

“Do your worst, you infamous villain, and detested renegade of your race.”

“Ha! ha! ha! Carrying it bravely, eh? But, you don’t know half that I can do yet. Do you know where we are?”

“I do not; nor do I care. So long as you are near, it is an accursed spot.”

“We are upon the Kissimmee river, about half the distance between that lake and Okeechobee. Do you know how you came here?”

“I have an indistinct recollection of receiving a blow. The rest is dark—save—save—” and a half-smile flitted over his face.

“Save what? It must be some pleasant thought thus to cause you to smile. Let us know what it was.”

“I do not care to waste words with you.”

“Oh, no matter. But I can tell you what your thought was in your dream.”

“Did I say I had a dream?”

“No, but you did. You dreamed that Blanche, the blind girl, was in your arms.” Judson turned a searching look upon the man, but was startled by a voice asking:

“Who calls my name?” Judson pressed his hands to his temples, as if making an effort to recollect something, and then called:

“Blanche!”

“Here, Edward!” cried the poor girl, as she threw aside the blanket which had formed her covering, and reached forward as if she would clasp her beloved. Judson groaned in very agony of soul. He was a soldier. Suffering, capture, wounds and death are things not unlooked for, and when they come, not even a murmur is heard. But, when the soldier saw the idol of his soul—the helpless, harmless, beautiful Blanche Bradley—in the hands of that remorseless wretch, and apparently far beyond the reach of aid, it is no wonder that his heart was filled with the most bitter anguish. H

gazed upon the poor girl, and for some time remained silent. He was aroused from a half-reverie by her asking :

"Are you near me, dear Edward?"

"I am here, Blanche, like yourself, a captive, in the power of a monster."

"I can not feel you! Why don't you take my hand, and let me rest my head upon your breast?" Judson made an attempt to rise, but he staggered and fell back.

"I'll assist you, young man!" said MacDonald; and he reached forth his hand which Judson took, and with its help, he gained the stern of the boat and seated himself beside the blind girl. She threw herself into his arms, and clung to him as if she feared some accident might again part them.

"Can you not save me, dear Edward?" she asked. "Take me anywhere away from *his* presence!" she added, with a shudder.

"I hope for the best, dearest."

"Are we both prisoners?"

"Yes, Blanche."

"And in a boat upon the lake?"

"Upon the river."

"Are you hurt, Edward? You speak in a faint voice."

"I received a slight wound last night, but it is nothing serious, darling."

"Who are those bad men who have taken us captives?"

"Better not know—so say no more of them."

"Oh, let her speak," exclaimed MacDonald. "It won't hurt my feelings a bit. We all profess to be *bad* men according to your standard. Let her go on."

"Where are they conveying us?" asked Blanche.

"I do not know, darling; probably to some of their Everglades' retreats where they hope no civilized foot will ever pursue them."

"And you will not leave me again, will you, Edward?"

"Not if I can help it. But do not speak farther. Cling close to me, dearest, and we will hope for the best."

The current of the Kissimmee is quite rapid, running at the rate of from five to six miles an hour. This is, perhaps, somewhat singular, flowing as it does from north to south, when we take into consideration the fact, that only a few miles

distant, and running at a rate of four miles per hour, from south to north, is the celebrated and unaccountable Gulf stream, or current of the ocean.

The savages plied the oars vigorously, and, running as they were with the river, their progress was rapid. They soon arrived at Lake Okeechobee.

To cross this body of water required the balance of the day and the night following, as their progress was less rapid than upon the river. But it was at length accomplished, and the Everglades of which Judson had heard so much, but had never seen, appeared in view.

What a multitude of conflicting emotions agitated the soul of Judson! The gentle being he so idolized was resting upon his heart in calm and holy confidence, clinging as the ivy to the oak—the tender vine to its bold protector. Her presence ever had been to him a heaven of bliss, but now it was a pain. And it became still more so because she was so confiding, so powerless. He thought of the picture Morris had painted—of the man with hollow voice, of sunken eyes, disheveled locks, of rags and chains. He thought of the poor maniac girl and her reputed child. Who would take her to their heart? In the bosom of poor old father Loveday she could find a home.

The lake had been passed, and the party were about merging into the brake, when one of the savages gave vent to an exclamation of surprise and pointed toward the north. MacDonald gazed in the direction indicated. A frown settled upon his face, and he clutched his huge knife as he muttered:

"It is the chief, and alone!" Judson remembered the look that Billy had given MacDonald at the fort, while he had been speaking of the maniac, and, connecting this with the fact that the renegade had separated from the party, and that the chief was evidently in pursuit, it could not but inspire hope in his heart. His captor observed the smile which lighted up his face, and said:

"Your hopes are vain, Judson. I grant you that the chief would release the captives, if he dared, for he has the heart of a woman, or a chicken. But, you know the laws that govern us? You are all my captives, and no person dare interfere. If Billy should attempt it, chief as he is, he would be bound and punished. So make up your mind that no power on

earth can stay me in my revenge. I have permitted that girl to remain at your side, and she can remain with you for some time to come. Do you know the reason why I do this?"

"I can not say that I do."

"It is to render your separation the more bitter."

"Fiend! You will yet be foiled."

"You think so, do you? Well, upon my word, you have a large amount of confidence in *something*—I don't know what; for, as matters stand now, I don't really see much that looks like a rescue. Do you see that rocky ledge?"

"I do, plainly."

"There are a range of hills and ledges connected with that which Satan and all his imps could not take. At the base is the settlement, where the Seminoles reside. It is our stronghold, and will so remain, as long as I live to encourage the Indians to defend it."

"I know it," replied Judson. "At a level spot, or shelf, about half-way up the sides, is *your* den. It is there that old Mr. Loveday's daughter is concealed; and another victim is chained to your door. Is it not so?"

MacDonald looked surprised, and then raised himself to his full height, gazing in the direction of the cliff. He evidently was endeavoring to ascertain if Judson could see what he had described. Satisfying himself that he could not, he asked:

"How did you learn this, Master Soldier?"

"Oh, your stronghold and its surroundings are well known to the army, and will be taken in less than a week from this time, if I don't miss my guess. If I had my wish, it would be taken the moment your foot touches the shore."

"Indeed! A pretty friend you are—a good well-wisher!" he added, scornfully.

"Yes. You will recollect that you have now Colonel Taylor to deal with, and five hundred veteran Indian fighters. They are on your track, and will hunt you and your blood-thirsty crew to the death, as you so richly deserve."

MacDonald did not reply for a few moments, but at length said:

"Well, let him come. Here we could meet and successfully contend with five thousand white-livered puppets of your mean government. Let Taylor come, and, maybe, his scalp-lock will grace a Seminole lodge."

The stream was now becoming very narrow running along the base of ragged rocks, some of which were overhanging in such a manner as to threaten to fall at any moment. At length the boat was moored alongside a rocky shelf, and the party disembarked. They passed along, for a distance of about twenty yards, through a narrow defile, and then emerged in a well-beaten path, which wound its way up the steep.

It was a rugged ascent, and the wounded man found much difficulty in toiling up, encumbered as he was with the blind maiden. But at length the open space, described by Morris, was reached. There were the flat, the light above, and the smoking valley below. There were the rude wigwams, and the log-works. Near him was the cabin, and, around, the huts described. Even the iron chain and the staple were in view, but nothing was seen giving the slightest indication of human life, save at the village in the valley. Far beyond, spread the lake; but not a speck appeared upon its surface. Friends were not yet in sight. Judson sunk upon the earth, panting for breath, while Blanche seated herself by his side.

In a moment the Indians, who had accompanied MacDonald on the journey, disappeared. The renegade turned to Judson, and asked:

"Do you see any evidence of *life* around?"

"I do not. It looks like a tiger's lair, awaiting the tiger."

"Ha! ha! Good! You may consider yourself the tiger's prey. Ha! ha!" Then he added: "And you think, if I was absent, you could escape without difficulty?"

"I see nothing to prevent me from finding my way to the river, or to the coast, if I am left free to go."

MacDonald placed a small, peculiarly carved bit of bone to his lips, and blew a shrill blast. In an instant, a dozen tawny forms appeared, as if coming from the face of the cliff, or from the earth below their feet.

"These are my guard," he continued. "If you should attempt an escape in my absence, you would be instantly seized by them. You see I have my arrangements perfect, and, if you are wise, you will not attempt to foil me, or to escape. If Colonel Taylor should dare to advance upon us here, you can easily imagine what his fate would be. Our works below are almost impregnable. Here they are quite

so, and, with my own guard, I could defy him, and cut him in pieces, man by man, as I certainly shall do if he appears."

"Where is the cabin of your chief?"

"Upon the second ledge you see, yonder. He never troubles me, here. But I must leave you now. Remember you are to be free from setters so long as you make no attempt to escape. When you do this, I shall place you in chains, and give you prison fare."

"Who talks of chains?" The voice came from within the cabin. It was low and sepulchral — something frightfully hollow. At the same time, the wretched being, which had been described by Morris, came crawling forth. As his eyes fell upon Judson, he started to his feet, with a wild cry. He gazed steadily upon him for a moment, and then, tottering forward, with a half-choking, half-sobbing sound, he stammered forth:

"Ed—d —Edward—Judson!"

"You know me!"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Great God! who are you?"

"FREDERICK LOVEDAY! your old shipmate, who, you thought, perished on the coast of Florida!"

The friends met as only those under the weight of such misery can meet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAZED CAPTIVE.

MACDONALD saw the recognition, and rubbed his hands in very glee. The joy he felt was, that each one's sufferings would be the keener as they gazed upon their friend. He therefore left them.

Explanations were soon made. Frederick, it will be remembered, had landed in a small boat upon the coast of Florida, from the vessel upon which he belonged. It was supposed that his entire party had been killed. But such had not been the case. Frederick, however, was the only one

saved. He had been carried off by the savages, and, after a time, had, by chance, fallen into the hands of MacDonald. This was shortly after the capture of his sister, Jessie.

The renegade now felt that his position as captor-in-chief was, indeed, a proud one. A year before he had made overtures for the hand of Jessie, to old Stephen Loveday, but had been spurned. At that time he was a professed hunter, but report pronounced him a common plunderer. Upon his rejection, the brute nature of the man at once showed itself, and he vowed the most terrible revenge. He joined the savages, and, by his reckless daring, had managed to raise himself to the position of second in command. He was feared, even by the savages themselves, for he would not pause at any thing to gain his ends, or to gratify his revenge. Such was the monster who had possession of our friends.

After the first joys of meeting had passed, and explanations were mutually given, Judson asked:

"And your sister, Jessie, where is she?"

A convulsive tremor shook the frame of Frederick, as he replied:

"Near the end of all earthly suffering, I think!"

"Dying?"

"No, I think not, yet. But she can not last long."

"What is the matter with her?"

"Oh, Judson!" exclaimed Frederick, while his breast heaved with a terrible excitement, "you never can know what I have suffered; and yet, I am still alive!"

"I see the traces of more than mental suffering upon your face and form."

"My sister, bending under the weight of her grief, became a maniac."

"I heard this was the case!"

"Then you did hear of us?"

"Of Jessie, about a week since. Of yourself, a few hours after, from Charles Morris."

"Oh, yes; I saw him. But did he know me?"

"No. I did not even suspect who you were. I had long mourned you as dead. But go on. Tell me all about your sister."

"Better had she been dead. When I was brought here, I

found her, but she knew me not. She had been mad, I know not how long, nor how long she had been a captive, for I am sure she did not come here voluntarily."

"Did MacDonald represent that she had come of her own free will?"

"Yes; he said she had been tormented by one of the officers of the garrison, and came here to hide herself, and to escape her father's promise of her hand to the officer. To avoid any attempt for her recovery, he said she was married, to him by Indian rites."

"It is all false. She was forcibly seized by MacDonald a year ago, and brought here. Her father has made every effort to find her, and is grieving his life away on her account. Her professed marriage to MacDonald, if it ever took place at all, was as forced as her abduction."

"A year ago!" repeated Frederick, thoughtfully. "Why her child is older than that, or else I am a very bad judge."

"Her child! Oh! yes. I remember it was said she had a child. Is it with her now?"

"Yes; and appears to share all its mother's grief. It, also, is quite ill."

"And you have watched over them for a whole year?"

"Constantly, Ned; but, I can not endure it much longer. I feel that I am sinking fast."

"Courage. Taylor will be here with troops in a day or two, and I hope for a rescue."

"God grant that it may be so. But, would you like to see Jessie?"

"I would, indeed. Perhaps I may be of benefit to her."

"Follow me." Frederick entered the cabin, followed by Judson, leading Blanche. In the corner of the dreary lodge there had been erected a platform of plank. Upon this were placed a number of blankets and skins, forming a very comfortable bed. It evidently contained a human form. Judson approached, and bent over the couch, but he started back with an exclamation of horror.

"I have become accustomed to that face," said Frederick.

"Is she not dead?"

"Oh! no." At this moment the invalid threw off the covering from her face, and turned her gaze upon the

Intruders. It was as white as marble, while her great black eyes, which presented so strong a contrast, shone with an unnatural light. She first fixed her gaze upon Judson, and then turned it upon the blind girl. Then extending her hand, she asked:

"Why are ye here, pretty maid?" The presence of the maniac had not been explained to Blanche, but, from the conversation she had heard between her lover and the brother, she comprehended the state of affairs. She therefore approached the bedside and attempted to speak. But her feelings overcame her, and she burst into tears.

"Don't weep, poor child!" said Jessie, as she caressed the blind girl. "This should be a house of joy and not of grief. Charles will be here to-night, and then I am to be married. Oh! I shall be *so* happy! Then you shall have my boy. I am *not* his mother! I thought I was, but there was a bright form came to my bed last night and told me that I was not." A pair of little bright eyes peered timidly over the shoulders of the maniac, and then nestled down close by her side. Jessie placed her arms around the little one, and exclaimed:

"There, don't cry. Mamma will protect her boy."

"What a sad sight!" exclaimed Judson, as he stepped into the open air. "And can it be possible that this monster can retain that poor girl in his possession, an unwilling captive, from the mere desire of revenge? Her state is evidently at its worst."

"What do you think of her case?" asked Frederick, anxiously, perceiving that Judson evidently read her condition with a physician's eye.

"I think she will recover. She has been struggling with a violent fever, and I should judge it to be turning now. She will either sink at once, or begin to mend. If she should recover, there is one especial consolation you will have."

"What is that?"

"She will no longer be a maniac!"

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. Such cases are always compensated for long, low sickness, by a restoration of mental clearness, if they recover at all."

"God grant then she may recover, and yet prove a blessing

to her friends, and see something of happiness, for her sufferings have indeed been great."

"Amen, and amen! And may her persecutor be made to feel the weight of sorrow he has caused her to bear! Blanche, darling," whispered Judson to the poor girl who was yet weeping, "don't grieve. I trust a few days will suffice to make us all happy again in restored freedom."

"Do you think we will be rescued?"

"I do most confidently think so."

"And that poor Jessie will be restored to her friends again?"

"Yes; if we are saved, she, too, will share our good fortune."

"And will she, if she lives, be restored to her sound mind, fully, so as to know her friends?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And marry Charley Morris?"

"I see no reason to doubt it." And yet there was a look of pain passed over the face of Judson.

"And poor Blanche must remain in darkness forever! Oh! it is hard—very hard! Why can I not rend this black veil from before my eyes, if only long enough to gaze once upon your dear face, Judson."

"You must not repine, darling."

"I know it is wrong—very wrong—but I can not help it. I can remember—oh! it seems like a dream—when I was blessed with sight. The sun was beautiful—the heavens, the stars, the earth, the green fields—oh! do they look the same now, dear Judson?"

"The same as then, darling. You must fancy that you see things as you saw them then. You can *hear* now, Blanche. You can hear the waters of this little rippling brook as it goes singing by, and you can hear the tinkling of that cascade. Its music is as sweet to your ears as it is to mine. You can not see them, it is true, while I, who can, have scarcely cast a glance in that direction. And if you can not see me, you can feel my touch, and hear my voice."

"But, will you never weary of the poor blind girl?"

"You are all the world to me."

"You are good—oh! so good, and you make me so happy, dear Edgard!"

The happy trio—happy in their companionship of misery—Judson, Frederick and Blanche—sat for some time in silence. At length they were startled by a cry, and the emaciated form of Jessie Loreday shot rapidly past them. Judson sprung to his feet to clasp her, but he was too late.

Upon a ledge, or rather shelf of rock, but a short distance from them, grew an oak of considerable size. It had, to all appearance, as it increased in size by growth, gradually settled, so that it hung over a chasm in a horizontal manner. It was held fast in this position by the huge roots which clung with great tenacity to the rock and soil. Toward this tree Jessie bent her steps, and almost before any person was aware that she had left her bed, she was walking upon the trunk, and had even reached the branches of the oak. There upon that giddy height she stood, erect, calling and beckoning to some imaginary person. Further and further she proceeded, until the frail limbs bent beneath her weight. She then seated herself upon one of the branches, and called :

"Charles! Charles! Are you not coming?"

Her friends stood horror-stricken. They dared not move—they dare not speak. The very blood appeared frozen within their veins. A false step or movement, and poor Jessie would be dashed to pieces upon the rocks below.

"What can be done? Is there no way to save her?" whispered Frederick.

"Hush! She is speaking again!"

"Shall I come to you, Charles? Well, wait for me, and I will come."

"Oh! my God! She is going still further on. Two more feet and she will be lost. I must—I must—Jessie! Jessie—here is your Charles!" The poor girl heard the voice, and reclining herself, cast back a mournful glance, exclaiming as she did so:

"No! You are deceiving me. Here he is!" and she pointed away out in the airy world before her.

"She will be lost unless something can be done at once."

"The child!"

"What do you mean?"

"It is a desperate hazard, but we only chance. See, she is already making motions to her fancied lover. Quick!

bring the child?" Judson sprang into the cabin, and soon returned with the child in his arms. He hurried with it to the foot of the tree, and holding it forth, exclaimed:

"Jessie—Jessie! Come. Baby wants you!"

It was a moment of intense anguish. Upon the result of a sentiment hung a human life. And if death came—such a death! It was horrible to contemplate. Great drops of perspiration stood upon the faces of the two men.

When Jessie saw the child, she started up with a cry of joy, and commenced to retrace her steps. Her movement was so sudden that she lost her balance, and she toppled over. But she caught with one hand upon a slender limb, and there hung with an almost superhuman strength. A moment more, and she must lose her hold, and be dashed in pieces upon the earth below.

"Oh, God! Why am I chained?" groaned Frederick, as he covered his face with his hands, and fell almost lifeless to the ground. Judson sprung for the oak, but he was seized by a powerful hand and thrown aside. Then a voice exclaimed:

"You are too badly hurt, young man, to attempt so perilous a task. It requires *strength!*" These words did not stay the speaker, for he had already reached the branches of the oak.

Jessie was still beyond his reach. He therefore clasped the body of the tree with his legs, turning his head and body downward. Hanging in this manner, he caught the girl in his powerful arms. In a moment more, he sat astride the trunk. After a short time he slowly advanced, and Jessie was delivered safely into the arms of Judson.

"Oh! how can we ever thank you?" exclaimed both brother and friend, together, as they saw the danger passed.

"Baby Bowlegs, chief of the Seminoles, want no thanks for doing simply his duty."

"It was a noble act, and performed, I believe, from the promptings of a noble heart. I wish we could be friends."

"And so we can be, when the usurper's foot is withdrawn from my territory."

"May I ask you one question?" said Judson.

"Proceed"

"Is it by your consent that these maidens are detained here prisoners?"

"No. And not with my knowledge, until very recently."

"Will you not release them?"

"They shall be free!"

MacDonald had approached just in time to hear the latter portion of the conversation. He frowned bitterly, and then sprung into the pathway, and without a word, commenced his descent toward the Indian village.

Billy, after having dashed through the line of soldiers, as stated in a previous chapter, had hurried forward, and had arrived just in time to perform the noble part we have here described.

CHAPTER X.

THE KING DISCROWNED.

JESSIE was conveyed to her bed, perfectly exhausted. In a short time she sunk into a quiet slumber. The chief bent over her a few moments, and then said:

"It was a trying ordeal, but its results will be beneficial."

"How so?" asked Judson.

"Have you never heard that a sudden shock sometimes restores the reason of a maniac, as well as to deprive a sane person of reason?"

"I have heard of such cases, but never witnessed one."

"This will be the case now, if I am not much mistaken," added the chief, speaking with earnestness.

"God grant it, for the sufferer's sake, if she is to be permitted again to see her friends and home. If she is to remain here, she had better never know her true condition."

"When the girl first conceived the idea that her lover was in that tree, it was simply the delirium of her fever, and *not* her former insanity," said the chief, not noticing the soldier's remarks. "She became partially conscious of her danger, while hanging upon that limb, and fully so after I had raised her in my arms. She turned upon me an unmistakable look of gratitude. She will rest quietly now. Perhaps she will not wake for two or three days. When she does, if I am not greatly mistaken, you will find her reason restored."

"And will you not then permit both her and poor blind Blanche to return to their friends?" persisted Judson, determined to press the painful moment for a propitious answer.

The chief was silent for a moment, and then said: "I will do all I can. How much that may be remains to be seen."

"Are you not chief here? And can you not command?"

"So far as our laws sustain me, but no further. But I can use my influence. If I can not succeed by that, I will resort to stratagem. The brother shall also be free. But you, lieutenant, will still be held, for you are a prisoner of war."

"I am content. Do with me as you wish, but restore those innocent ones to their friends, and I will bless you, chief."

"I would to God," continued Billy, "that this war was over. I am heartily sick of it. But I must fight—fight to the bitter end. Whose child is this?" he continued, taking the blind girl by the hand.

"It is the daughter of a Robert Bradley, an honest hunter, living near the fort, at Tampa. Her mother was murdered, a few days ago, by MacDonald."

"Horrible villain!" muttered the chief. He then continued, as he held both the hands of Blanche in his own:

"But you shall be saved, poor child. You do not fear me, do you?"

"Oh! no! You speak so kindly that I am sure you are good, and I will always love you."

A tear started to the eye of the chief, but he dashed it aside, exclaiming, as he turned away:

"I have seen her face and heard her voice before. It must have been when she was a child, although I do not recollect ever having heard the name of Robert Bradley."

The chief walked from the cabin. He was heard to speak in a loud and angry tone, and, leaving Blanche seated by the side of the sleeper, the brother and Judson followed. They saw large numbers of the savages coming up the winding pathway.

It was but a few moments before, perhaps, a hundred warriors gained the flat, and, with perfect silence, seated themselves upon the ground. MacDonald was at their head.

"What means this?" cried Billy, his eyes flashing with rage.

"It means," returned MacDonald, calmly, "that I have called a council."

"And have you *dared* to call a council of my braves and warriors without consulting me?"

"I have dared to do what every member of the tribe has a right do," was the half-ferocious answer.

"You shall be made to pay for this. I will teach you your place. Men, seize that traitor!"

No one moved—not a hand obeyed the call.

"Speak to them again—they don't hear you!" The white savage smiled, as if his triumph were complete.

"Why have you called my warriors together?" asked the chief.

"For council, I said,"

"To what end?"

"You threatened to release my captives. I have called the warriors together for them to decide whether or not you have a right to do so."

"Then let them decide."

"And you will be governed by their decision?"

"No! I shall be governed by my own decision—by *justice*! I shall repudiate all law which permits such villainy as you have practiced, even though it displace me from my command, and reduce me to the position of a prisoner."

"Which it will be very likely to do, if you attempt to set aside the laws which you know are not to be changed by any man's will."

"Well, go on. State your case to my men, and make your appeal. I am prepared to answer you—and to fight!"

"Men," exclaimed MacDonald, stepping forward, "I have now in my possession four prisoners. I captured them without assistance. Have I not a right to hold them, in spite of any personal sympathy which the chief may feel?"

[The different appeals were made in the language used by the Seminoles, of which MacDonald was perfect master.]

"Yes! Yes!" was the low, but unanimous response.

"But," said the chief, stepping forward, "two of the prisoners are women. We do not make war upon such. Besides,

to have no right, by our laws, to capture or retain any female who has not a husband, father or brother in arms against us. Neither of these females have any such friend opposed to us. Has he then a right to keep them against my orders?"

"No! no!"

"The chief is deceiving you," continued MacDonald. "The first captive had a brother connected with a war-vessel which was cruising off our coast, and that brother was captured upon our soil, and is one of my prisoners. Therefore, is she not now lawfully my prisoner, beyond the control of any person?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Were you engaged upon a war-vessel?" asked Billy of Frederick.

"I can not deceive you—I was."

"Then there is no further hope in argument in that question."

"What can be done?"

"Circumstances will dictate."

"I have heard," continued Judson, "that Indians are superstitious. Can you not work upon their fears?"

"In what way?"

"Tell them that Jessie is mad—possessed with some strange spirit—and would bring trouble upon them if detained here."

"No. If such were the belief, she would be instantly hurled from that rock, and dashed in pieces. But, men," continued Billy, "this excuse can not be urged with regard to the blind girl. She has no such friend against us."

"There again the chief is mistaken. Her father is a sworn enemy of the red-man, and is this moment guiding the soldiers of Colonel Taylor against us. You will learn the truth of this by to-morrow, for the army will attack us by that time. Now, what is your decision? Have I a right to my prisoners?"

The Indians at once arose to their feet, and with one voice answered: "The prisoners are yours."

MacDonald advanced with the most insulting air toward Billy.

"You see the result of opposing me," he said. "And what is your decision now?" On most occasions Billy was very

cool, and used much judgment in all his actions. But, his sympathy had now become enlisted, and his anger fully aroused. This, added to the insolent manner of one whom he looked upon as so entirely beneath him, was more than he could endure. He therefore cried :

" By the Great Spirit above, I say they *shall* be free!" and with a blow from his ponderous fist he sent MacDonald reeling to the ground.

Perhaps, had he committed this act without uttering a word, it would not have been noticed by the savages, but, to take exceptions, or to oppose the decision of a council, was a serious offense. MacDonald knew his advantage, and with more composure than could have been expected from one of his character, he recovered himself, saying :

" Men, the chief swears he will not heed your decision, but will set the captives free. *Seize him!*" This was instantly done. To struggle in their hands would have been death, and so he quietly submitted to be bound. After this had been done, he turned to his men and said :

" Warriors, look at me. You have bound your chief! This is an indignity never put upon me but once before, and that was by the white man. What was the result? I burned and laid waste their town. What will be the result of this? Why, that you will be without a chief! Perhaps you think MacDonald will fill my place. Is he true and tried? I have led you for twelve years, and yourselves will attest that I have done my duty. Can any one of you point out the time when I faltered in battle? Let him speak who can. And is it a crime to spare the vanquished? Let him who does not wish the same, pronounce it to be such. Now, you have bound your old leader because he wishes to set free two poor, captive women, or rather children. What are you to do? Will you trust to *that* man? Not one drop of Indian blood flows in his veins, and he will forsake you when it becomes his interest to do so. Who will lead you into the battle which will take place soon? Shall it be the man who bound you chief? If so, I am content, but it will be ill for you."

There was a reaction in favor of the speaker, and the savages began whispering together, and casting glances of hatred

toward MacDonald. The renegade saw this, and he knew that he must counteract the effect of this speech in some manner. He therefore said :

"Men, the chief tells you that I will prove false to you in the hour of danger! Have you not seen me often in battle? Did I ever shrink? Did I ever desert you at such a time? I will tell you something that will startle you, and I only ask you to wait a short time, and you will learn the truth of what I say. It is the intention of the chief to sell you all! He has already plotted to surrender you to the enemy as he did two nights ago, the band that accompanied us to the fort."

A series of yells followed this announcement, and the savages danced fiercely around, brandishing their tomahawks, and evincing the most violent demonstrations.

In a short time, however, the chief—his feet having also been bound—and the captives, were left alone. But a guard was kept at a little distance, and the attempt upon the part of any of them to escape, would have resulted fatally.

"Oh! my friend," said Judson, "you have brought this upon yourself for me. I pity you."

"You are mistaken," replied the chief. "I acted from my own free will, and was not influenced by your advice or wishes."

"Perhaps I should have said for *us*?"

"It was only my duty to attempt what I have."

"And think you it will prove altogether a failure?"

"Not altogether. The sick girl will be saved, but I fear for the blind one."

"What do you mean?" asked the lover, the blood mounting to his very temples.

"I mean this. MacDonald is well aware that, upon the arrival of the enemy, his trick will be found out. He will not remain, but take the earliest opportunity to depart. He dare not meet me if I am ever again free. He can not remove the sick girl. Indeed, I think he has little disposition to do so. He will, therefore, take the blind one, if it is possible, for he is not the man to give over any well-matured purpose."

"Can I not escape with her to-night?"

"It would be certain death to you to pass that door after nightfall. But there is hope yet. The troops may arrive

before the traitor expects, and if the girl has not already been removed, it will be too late to do so then. I might possibly have saved them by pretending that they were my own children, but, I could not tell so base a lie. There is one favor I wish you to do me. Will you?"

"Any thing! What is it?"

"After dark I will roll near the door of the cabin. You will not be bound. You must untie my hands and feet. If MacDonald comes near us during the night, I will hurl him from the precipice. But as daylight again approaches, I must again be tied."

This was done; but the looked-for visitor came not. Slowly the night passed away, while the chief chafed under his restraint like a chained tiger. As the hours waned, he felt the chances lessen which he had hoped would offer to assist him again to power.

CHAPTER XI. PLOTTINGS OF A NIGHT.

Poor Jessie Loveday rested well during the night. Not a word or groan escaped her; while Blanche, in her loving confidence, slept as sweetly as an infant reposing upon its mother's bosom. Well was it for her that she could sleep.

To the Lieutenant the situation was new, and possessed something of romance. It would call forth action, stratagem, daring; and this would have given a charm even to captivity, had it not been for the deep solicitude he felt in behalf of the Indians. But, he had confidence in the ultimate triumph of the chief, and still more so as to the result when the troops should arrive. And so the night passed, not hopelessly, away for him.

Not so with Frederick. A thousand times before had hope filled his heart, only to vanish and leave the darkness there more intense. Often had his sister appeared to regain, for an instant, her reason. She would, at times, gaze mournfully into his face and call him brother, and his heart would

with joy, but, soon her mind again would become clouded, and her ravings perhaps more wild. Day by day he had watched over her, hoping and praying, until at length his very soul had sickened, and his strength and courage almost forsaken him. Still, he relaxed not in his attentions, watching as before, suffering as before, loving as before, although not so hoping.

It is true he now had friends near him, but, they were powerless; and in his fancy he could but repaint the picture ever before himself. Perhaps Judson would be fettered like himself, and, like himself become broken-hearted—crushed in body and spirit. Perhaps poor blind Blanche would become a maniac under the restraint and taunts of the wretch who held her in bonds.

And his own dear sister? Was she indeed destined to recover from the malady which had preyed upon her mind? It had, at times, brought her fancied happiness, rendering her, as it did, oblivious to her real situation. Should consciousness return and be permanent, her anguish would be measurably increased, if her captivity should continue.

But, Judson had said that the troops were coming. There was hope in that. The chief evidently was the friend of the females, and here was more hope, even though he was a prisoner himself. Hours passed, and Frederick mused on, striving to see deliverance even in that dark time.

At length he arose to his feet, and stepped softly to the bedside of his sister. The pale moon shone through an opening, and its rays played about her lips. She was smiling sweetly. He bent his face close to hers, and listened. She was breathing soft and regularly. He placed his hand gently upon her brow. It was not marble-like or flushed as it had alternately been, but bore a genial warmth. He pressed his lips to her pale cheek. His breast heaved—a half-suppressed sigh was heard, and when he raised his head, there was a glistening drop resting upon the sleepers face. A tear had fallen from that manly eye. The child was also sleeping by her side.

Blanche was resting upon a rude bed by the side of Jessie. She, too, was smiling. Does not some bright angel hover near the pillow of the innocent when danger threatens, and

dark clouds are gathering? Frederick gazed upon her, and exclaimed:

"Sleep on, poor child. You are happy now. Oh! that your waking could be equally so!"

"Frederick?"

"Ah! Ned. Are you awake?"

"Do you think I could sleep?"

"And yet you require rest."

"And do you not require rest, also?"

"I have become accustomed to this watching. It is my constant, endless duty."

"Well, they say one can get used to any thing but hanging."

"You are disposed to jest, Ned."

"Well, why not, Fred? Jessie is recovering, and to-morrow we will all be free and happy."

"Why are you so confident?"

"Why? Didn't I tell you that Colonel Taylor was coming?"

"Yes, but you do not suppose that he can walk directly into this stronghold, as he could walk into the open door of a church, do you?"

"Well, I *do* expect there will be *some* opposition, but, that he will succeed, I am confident. Zachary Taylor is a man who never attempts what he dare not carry out, if courage, resolution, and a quick mind can avail."

"He may. But it will be after a long siege. You have no idea of the strength of the works below. This spot is only approached by narrow, winding pathways, up the sharp hill-side. I tell you, twenty determined men can hold this place against a thousand."

"If that thousand were coming from below, perhaps. But how from above?"

"I do not know about that, never having thought of such an approach."

"Have you never been higher up than this spot?"

"Never. I was brought through the village when I came here, and since that time I have never left the place."

"Well, Charley Morris has explored these hills, and is acquainted with the approaches to this den. He will act as

guide, and my word for it, they will find some way to reach us."

"Well, that offers some comfort. Shall we not question Billy with regard to the probabilities of success, if the attack is made from above?"

"Not for the world, Fred. It would be a direct insult."

"He appears to be our friend!"

"Don't say *our* friend, for he is not. He is a friend to those innocent creatures lying there, for humanity's sake. But he is *not* a friend to either of us. We are his prisoners of war."

"But he is himself a prisoner, now!"

"Exactly. And that is one reason why we should *not* make any propositions, or ask any questions which would indicate that we entertained the least suspicion he could prove false to his band. No. I tell you, Billy is as true as steel. He will be released before the fight begins, and will head his men. It is this I fear more than any thing else. No, Fred, do not imagine for a moment that, because the chief resolved to save those poor girls, he is a traitor to his tribe."

"Why do you so much fear the leadership of Billy?"

"Because he is the only one under whom the men will fight well."

"I think MacDonald will head them well."

"No. It is not his intention to head them at all."

"How do you know this?"

"I will tell you. During the night and darkness, I have been busy, as you will learn. I crept cautiously to the edge of the next logge. I heard the rascal, and another white renegade in conversation. It was very pleasant. They first proposed to kill you, the chief, and myself. It seems they have a quantity of gold secreted somewhere, which is the result of former plunderings. After we were quietly disposed of, they proposed to take Blanche, and make the best of their way to the coast, where they would embark for the Bahamas, and turn wreckers."

"Well, and what prevented them from carrying out their pleasant programme?"

"It was feared if they attempted to murder the chief, they would be discovered. For, although the Indians are prejudiced

against him." at the present time, they would not submit to that, and an attempt of the kind upon his part, would unmask the villainy of MacDonald."

"What did they decide to do?"

"Well, you may as well know, so as to be prepared to meet it?"

"Speak. I shall not be alarmed as far as any plot may refer to myself."

"Well, Fred, he is to wait until the boats appear at the edge of the lake, and the troops are ready for a move. He is to appear very valorous himself, and offer to lead on the warriors; but, finally, in order to test Billy, he is to suggest that the chief be released and permitted to take command. This, of course, he will do, as he could not see the whites approach without being at the head of his men, if it was possible for him to do so. After all the men, with the exception of a guard at this place, which will be his confidante, have been withdrawn, Mac will return, knock us quickly upon the head, take Blanche, and make his way to the coast."

"A very pleasant arrangement for us, truly. But, what is to become of Jessie?"

"If it is deemed safe to transport her, she will be taken along; but, if she is too ill, she will be left behind. But the scoundrel cares nothing about her, and is, in reality, afraid of her on account of her madness."

"What steps can we take in this matter?"

"As soon as I heard this conversation, I returned and informed the chief of it. I could distinctly see by the light of the moon, that his face was working with the intensity of his feelings. After a time, he said:

"'If the enemy marches upon me, I shall fight to the last. But, I desire that the women shall be saved, and I am determined it shall be so.' He then asked me to pledge him my honor, not only for myself but for you, that, in case he left us, we would not offer to escape, provided he left us with arms to protect the females; or, if we found that we could convey them to their friends, and did so, that we would return and deliver ourselves up."

"And you made the promise?"

"I did."

"But, if Taylor should be successful?"

"Then, of course, we are all free. Here is a knife for you. I have another myself. But, remember, we are to use them upon no person except MacDonald. You will also find that the staple to which the chain which binds you is attached, has been loosened. It can be easily drawn. But you are not to take advantage of this, unless it becomes necessary to protect the girls, or save yourself from assassination."

"Is Billy at the door?"

"But a short distance from it."

"And still bound?"

"He has been free since dark. But day is breaking. I must fasten the cords, as this was Billy's request." Judson stepped into the open air, and, in a short time the ropes were securely drawn around the chief. He seated himself by his side, and watched the gray merging into the blue, and the pale white receiving their golden tints. The morning star lost its brilliancy, and the god of day arose, blushing, from its bed.

It was a lovely December morning, genial in that climate, as a May-day in the more northern latitudes. The birds trilled forth their notes of joy as merrily as if no saddened heart was beating to their music.

Judson gazed listlessly upon the lake, and far away he thought he saw a dark speck, which each moment assumed a form more definite. But he was mistaken. It was but the shadow of a fleecy cloud.

Of a sudden he appeared to recollect something, and placing his hand in his bosom, he drew forth the paper which contained the secret, and opened it. Then turning toward the cabin, he called:

"Frederick! Frederick!" That person immediately made his appearance.

"Be seated, Fred. If I am not mistaken, this paper, which was given me, and is said to contain a secret with regard to Blanche, may, at least a portion of it, be read aloud to you, Fred. Let us move a little apart. You see the opening paragraph commences with strange words. *'To James MacDonald I owe all my misery!'*

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT.

"WHERE has not that serpent left his sting? But go on, Read!"

"The document is well-written, showing a person of no ordinary cultivation:

"To James MacDonald I owe all my misery!

"I was born in the year 1806, on the island of Cuba, near the city of Havana. My father was a wealthy planter. My early recollection is identical with a house where all was sunshine. I received a liberal education, in a seminary at New Orleans. At the age of eighteen I graduated, and returned to my home. A grand *fête* was to be given, which was to usher me into society. My father's mansion blazed with brilliancy, and the guests were already assembling.

"Upon a sudden, I heard a great commotion below. I was preparing for the occasion in an upper room. I dispatched my maid to learn the cause. She returned, speechless and trembling. I rushed from my room to the scene. I saw a file of soldiers. My father was in custody. He was heavily ironed. The servants were rushing, in a frantic manner, through the rooms, while the guests stood paralyzed. My mother was sobbing, and prostrate upon the floor. I knelt by her, and begged that she would explain. But she had fainted, and could not. I sprung to my father's arms, but was rudely torn from him by one of the soldiers. A mist came over my eyes, and I sunk upon the floor, and became senseless, but not until I had heard my father exclaim:

"Farewell, beloved child — farewell, Blanche, I shall never see you more!"

"When I returned to consciousness, I found a few friends beside me, bathing my temples, and otherwise ministering to me. My mother sat near, her face pale as marble, her eyes fixed upon me, and tears streaming from them. I must have

remained unconscious a long time, for when I awoke the sun was shining brightly. I inquired the cause of my father's arrest, and learned that papers had been found in his mansion which showed him to be the leader of a deep conspiracy against the government of Spain, directly connected with our own island.

"And is my father guilty?" I asked.

"I can not believe so," my mother replied, "but, the evidence is said to be strong against him, and as there is known to be a plot on foot for the overthrow of the government, I fear for the worst."

"I asked when we should learn the result of his examination, and my mother informed me that a stranger had offered to bring her word as soon as his fate was decided. It was perhaps an hour after this, as we were seated upon the porch in anxious expectation, that a man rode rapidly up to the mansion. He dismounted, and approached. He wore upon his face that which, to me, appeared to be a smile. At all events, it gave me hope.

"Is he saved?" asked my mother.

"I must see yourself and daughter *alone!*" exclaimed the man. My mother was about to lead the way into the drawing-room when the stranger said :

"No. Let your friends retire. I can see you here." We were soon left alone, and he began :

"Some five years since I landed in Cuba. I was unfortunate and soon became penniless. Your husband—he addressed my mother—detected me in a theft. I pleaded my poverty, but it was of no avail. For four years I have languished in a prison. I was released at last, and resolved upon revenge. With some desperate men I leagued myself. We commenced correspondence with regard to a conspiracy against the government. I answered the name of Pedro Castello, your husband's name. I received a large number of letters under this name, and finally concealed them in your house. Your husband knew nothing of them. I then lodged the information with the authorities that he was the leader of the conspiracy, and gave them directions where the papers which would implicate him, would be found. I swore to be revenged. I have done. And now my revenge shall follow his family. As

hour ago your husband's head' rolled from the block! My name is JAMES MACDONALD!"

"Neither my mother nor myself heard any thing more, for we had both again fainted. When we recovered we found our mansion in the possession of soldiers, we were informed that it had been confiscated, that my father had indeed fallen, and that my mother and myself were ordered to quit Cuba within twenty-four hours, never to return again.

"At this decision my mother did not even weep. As for myself, I felt that any place would be preferable to that, now that my father was no more. We prepared for a hasty departure. A few valuables were permitted us, and we wandered to the wharf in search of some vessel upon which we could embark. Glad to escape we seized upon the first opportunity and engaged passage in a small craft bound for Savannah.

"We were off the coast of Florida when a violent storm arose. For a whole night we were tossed about in the raging waters. Our vessel was a frail one, and at length she struck a rock and was torn into a thousand fragments. I recollect the roaring of the dark waters as I was plunged into them, and then all was dark.

"I awoke and found myself in a strange place. Beside me sat a stranger. His face was kind and it reassured me. He spoke, and his voice was gentle. He had saved me from a watery grave, and I felt gratitude, although I sometimes wished, that if it could have been consistent with the will of heaven, I might have perished. My mother was no more, and I was, indeed, alone in the wide world.

"It was a month before I was sufficiently recovered from the shock to leave my room. But, on examination, I found that my home was no mean one. It was a frame dwelling, containing but two rooms, it is true, but then it was standing upon the bank of a beautiful river which wound its course through one of the most delightful groves I ever saw. The room which I had occupied was furnished with considerable taste, and several interesting books and drawings ornamented the table.

"My preserver; during my illness—a portion of the time I was delirious—was gentle as a mother could be, and I oft-

gazed upon him with wonder. Powerful as man could be, swarthy as an Indian, fearless in time of danger, and yet, gentle as a lamb. Even after my recovery, I lingered at this place, as if held by some enchantment. Perhaps it was because I knew not where to go. I certainly felt an attachment for my preserver, but I did not dream of its depths. I often observed that he would sit for hours gazing upon me, and I could not divine the cause.

"At length I spoke of departure. I saw the tears start to his eyes, and he begged me, if I could only content myself in his poor home, to remain a little longer. I knew not then why, but I gladly accepted the invitation. He now began to be absent from me more than he had been. He was frequently called to St. Augustine, a distance of twenty miles. He was also frequently called to the coast, and he saved many lives as he had done my own.

"At such times I felt the greatest solicitude for his safety, and was only happy when he returned and smiled upon me. But, things could not remain long as they were. I again spoke of taking my departure. He trembled like a frightened child for a moment, and then told me that when I went, it seemed to him as if the sun of his happiness would set forever. He loved me. Enough, that the educated Spanish girl became the wife of William Montgomery, the uncouth fisherman, hunter and wrecker of the St. John's river. But he possessed a fair education and natural intellect, and I was happy.

"We had been married nearly a year. I was very fond, during the absence of my husband, of wandering through the grove, and by the beautiful river. On several occasions I had seen a stranger pass near to me, but I gave no heed to it, until my husband had asked me at several different times, who it was that had left the dwelling just as he was approaching. I had seen no one, except in the grove.

"One day I saw William pick up a bit of paper near my bedroom window, which had been standing open. He glanced at it, and then turned his gaze upon me. I did not understand the meaning of that glance, and I asked him to let me see the paper. He did not reply, but left the house with the first frown I had ever seen resting upon his face.

"I know not why, but his looks and the thoughts of that

paper troubled me. That night he scarcely spoke to me. I begged him to tell me the cause, but he did not. When he left me on the following morning, I observed that he changed his coat, putting on one which he seldom wore, except when he went to St. Augustine. I asked him if he was going to that city, and he replied that he was not. His kiss at parting was cold, and his brow was stern. I thought I could detect a shade of sadness upon it. I watched until he disappeared from view. I then thought of the coat, and I instantly proceeded to search the pockets. I found the slip of paper and read upon it the following words:

"Darling, we must be cautious. I fear your husband suspects our intimacy; if he should discover us, my life would be taken."

"As I read those words, my brain reeled and I came near falling. I felt that fierce jealousy, so peculiar to the Spanish character, instantly arouse within me. I flew to the books where my husband had inscribed his name, and compared the handwriting. There was certainly a resemblance.

"And the truth was out! My husband was intriguing with another, and that a married woman. He feared her husband suspected, and had, no doubt, written that slip to hand her, in case he should have no opportunity to address her. I passed the day in tears. My suspicion at once fell upon a party by the name of Mulsford, who resided about three miles from us.

"It was quite late in the evening when my husband returned, and jealousy had not left me in a very good humor to receive him. I did not even rise as he entered, but he came directly across the room and imprinted a kiss upon my lips. But it appeared entirely formal, and I did not return it. He then asked me in a voice which I thought trembled with emotion, who it was that had just passed up the road. I had seen no person, but I wished to be sarcastic, and I replied that it must have been Mr. Mulsford.

"I do not think there was another word passed between us that night. As usual, the next day, he left me. Each subsequent day he became apparently more indifferent to me, which naturally increased the jealousy and the coldness upon my part. I was soon to become a mother.

"One day my husband left me, saying that he was going

to the city, and should not return until the next day. Night came on. I had heard something of the Seminole Indians, and I confess I felt uneasy. But, shaking off this feeling as much as possible, I retired to my bed. It was perhaps ten o'clock. I heard a noise at my window. I raised myself, and listened. The sash was raised, and a dark form entered. I was almost paralyzed with fear, when the intruder called my name in a whisper, and cautioned me to be silent, saying there were Indians around. I thought it was my husband. At the thought of danger, all my resentment vanished. I sprung to his side, throwing my arms around his neck.

"At this instant the door leading to the second apartment opened, and *my husband entered*, holding in his hand a light. The stranger disengaged my arms, bounded through the open window and was gone. I stood like a statue. I was utterly confused—I knew not what to say. Not that I had ever dreamed that my husband was jealous of me. He staggered back and gave vent to a groan that I never can forget. I sprung forward to meet him, but he stepped back, closed the door upon me, and I heard him leave the house.

"All that night I sat watching and listening. Certain it was that my husband had cause to think strange on discovering a man standing in my room, while I was encircling him with my arms. But as he certainly had no reason to misjudge me, he should have waited for an explanation. What was the motive of the stranger in entering in that manner and addressing me as he did? I at length arrived at the conclusion that my husband loved another and had wearied of me, and that this was a plot to fasten guilt upon me, in order to furnish a palpable excuse for leaving me.

"The night passed slowly away. Morning came. A neighbor passed the door and handed me a letter. He then proceeded, and I was alone. I glanced at the superscription and at once recognized the handwriting of my husband. I broke the seal and opened the paper. My eyes immediately fell upon three separate slips. I took up the first and read :

"*Darling, we must be cautious. I fear your husband suspects our intimacy. If he should discover us my life would be taken!*"

"This was the paper I had before seen, and which had

been the grounds of all my jealousy. It explained nothing. I took the second slip and read :

" *I learn your husband will go to St. Augustine on Thursday next. If he should, I will come.* "

" And that Thursday was yesterday, the very time that my husband was absent. It was clear to me that he was the writer, and that he had passed the day with Mrs. Mulsford. But why should he send me those papers? Why, unless to trust me? I clutched the third strip :

" *Wednesday eve.—Your husband goes to-morrow, sure. I will come at ten o'clock in the evening. Expect me, darling!* "

" But he was not there at that hour, for he was here. It was just ten when he entered this room and found the stranger. -But let me read his letter :

" *When I married you I little dreamed it would come to this. I loved you and do love you still better than life. I wondered how you could love me, but I did not think you capable of such treachery. Oh! God! you have murdered me. I have found these slips of paper which were sent to and intended for you. I was a personal witness to your duplicity and my shame, although I would to God my eyes had been closed in death before that horrid sight had been presented to them. You will never, never, see me again; but oh! I beg of you, for the sake of our unborn child, to beware of those who would ruin you. I leave the country a broken-hearted man.*

" *WILLIAM.*

" Those slips were written for and sent to me! What could it mean? I read the letter over and over, and at length the truth began to break in upon me. I had been the victim of a vile plot. But I had no enemies. I called upon my husband. He did not answer. I was almost frantic, and in a voice of agony I cried :

" *Who has done this?* An answer came which froze my very blood, and I fainted. That answer was :

" *JAMES MACDONALD!* And he will pursue you and yours to the death! He has sworn it!"

" Oh! the monstrous villain!" exclaimed Judson, as he sprung to his feet, " but he shall pay for this."

" But go on with the paper, Ned; I am most painfully interested."

"To proceed.

"I scarcely recovered my consciousness until after my child was born. I sought protection of my neighbors; but they, believing me the party in error, cast me off as unworthy. The villain still pursued me. I determined to go anywhere to escape him. So, with my child in my arms, I left that home I loved so much and wandered forth. Day and night I kept on my way, but at length body and heart both failed me, and I fell fainting at the door of a cabin."

"When I recovered, I found myself and child kindly cared for by an old man. Since that time I have made his house my home. He learned my story, and, for the safety of myself and child, he called me wife; but I am not so. I feel for him the affection of a sister, for he has ever been kind, noble, respectful.

"My story is nearly ended. My child had arrived at the age of four. One night the cabin was attacked by a small party of Indians, but Robert Bradley—this was my benefactor's name—succeeded in driving them away. During the firing, the gun which Robert held exploded, and the pieces flew in every direction. By this accident Mr. Bradley lost an eye, and my poor Blanche her sight entirely. I learned afterward that this attack was led by MacDonald, who, true to his savage instincts, had in truth joined the Seminoles."

Then there were other words which appeared to have been written at a later date. They were as follows:

"I have a presentiment of evil. Judson, if I should die, be good to my poor child, and pity her unhappy mother. I have seen, by chance, my husband. He knows not that we are even alive. He is—"

"Well, go on, Ned. Who is the father of Blanche?"

"The paper is here folded over, and sealed with half a dozen wafers. Wait a moment, and I will break it open."

"Put up the paper. Here comes MacDonald, and it is not best he should see it. He is too intimately concerned." Judson returned the paper to his bosom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BATTLE.

Down upon the lake were plainly to be seen the boats which contained a few soldiers and the supplies for Taylor's little army. And marching along the edge of the Everglades were the troops. They had advanced most of the distance by land, and the transports, instead of being brought directly across the lake in plain view as the Indians had expected, were kept close to the shore and as much concealed as possible. Thus the savages had been deceived, and their enemy was upon them before they were aware of their presence, although they were not unprepared to receive them.

Bill Silly had joined the command of Taylor, and informed that officer of all he knew concerning Judson. Charley Morris had also recovered from his wound and was with his friends. The ball from the rifle of MacDonald had cut a furrow in his temple, and had rendered him senseless for a time, but the injury was not of a serious character. He could not be induced to remain behind.

It was just as MacDonald was approaching our friends that they discovered the troops. A smile lighted up the face of Judson as he pointed to them and asked:

"Do you see that?"

"Yes," returned the renegade, in the most indifferent tone. "Does that afford you any special comfort?"

"To be candid with you, I should say it did."

"You expect a speedy release?"

"I shall hope such may be the case."

"Do you think your troops will be able to take the works in the valley below?"

"I do."

"And the place where we now are?"

"I do."

"And then you expect to be free?"

"Of course."

"Shall I tell you my plans?" asked MacDonald, a curl of contempt playing about his mouth.

"You can do just as you think fit about that."

"Oh! you are very indifferent now; but you will not remain so long. Do you see yonder small, black building?"

"Yes."

"It is the magazine. I am about to remove you and your friends to that building. If there is the slightest chance of your friends reaching this place, the magazine will be blown to atoms. What do you think of this? Are you indifferent to my plans now?"

Both Judson and Fred clutched the knife which Billy had given them. They had little fear that the threat with regard to the magazine would be carried into execution. They were sure that his object in removing them was that he might the easier carry out his plans of the night before, and remove Blanche. They resolved that the villain should die then and there.

Bet in this they were foiled, for, unseen by them, four powerful Indians had approached from the rear and seized them. They had made an agreement to use the weapons upon no person but MacDonald, and they were, therefore, compelled to submit. They were conveyed at once to the magazine and firmly bound. They were placed in such a position as not only to be able to see all that took place around them, but to hear any ordinary conversation which occurred at the cabin where the females were, and in front of which the chief was lying. Below they could see the savages forming in a square which occupied the center of the village, and they judged their numbers to be about three hundred. They could not but express their surprise that so small a number was remaining of the two thousand warriors who formed their army at the commencement of hostilities.

A dozen braves stood near MacDonald, evidently awaiting orders. The renegade turned to them and said:

"I wish to give our chief an opportunity to vindicate himself. He shall lead you to-day. Unbind him." This was done. The chief sprung to his feet. He gazed with a bitter frown upon the white troops, and then turning to his braves, he asked:

"Shall I lead you?"

"Yes," was the ready response,

"And you will obey me in every particular?"

"Yes."

"Then we will be victorious. MacDonald, go you to the outer work with an hundred men. I will join you soon." The fellow bit his lips, but there was no alternative, and he did as directed.

Then turning to one of the braves, he said:

"Defend the pass below with twenty men. Lowery, follow MacDonald!" The person to whom the chief addressed himself was the white renegade with whom MacDonald had been plotting the day before. He listened and asked:

"And the guard here?"

"Question me not," yelled the chief, "but do as I bid you."

Lowery obeyed. The fighting had already commenced.

"It is probable that the chief has forgotten us," said Judson. "I do not think it was his intention to have left us here bound. But his thoughts are now all given to the work before him."

"Well, I think we are safe, for, as far as I can see, there is not a soul left behind excepting ourselves and the girls."

"Can't we manage to free ourselves? How are your hands?"

"Bound so tightly that I can not move them."

"Hold a moment. I think I can loosen one of mine, and then, with the use of my knife, we will both soon be free. No, I am so firmly tied it is impossible."

"Fred, look below! Listen to those shouts! By the Eternal, they are charging the works! Look there! look there! Over they go! Hark to the cheering! And, see! the savages are flying in wild confusion! Hurrah! hurrah! The day is ours! Oh! these infernal ropes!"

"The next stand they make will be at the base of the hill, or perhaps upon this very spot."

"Fred, we *must* be free."

"Can't we call Blanche?"

"Blanche! Blanche!" The blind girl appeared at the door when she heard the voice of Judson, and he continued;

"Come to us, Blanche, at once."

"Is there not danger that she will fall over the rocks?" asked Fred.

"No; I can guide her. This way, Blanche. Do you hear my voice?"

"Yes, dear Edward."

"Well, then, come—straight—there, a little more to the right. Huzza! Fred, we will soon be free!"

"I think not!" MacDonald came bounding up the pathway and reached the spot. He seized Blanche as she had almost reached her lover, and, raising her in his arms as he would have done an infant, dashed forward, climbing the rocks above.

"Oh, God! and must I lose her now that freedom appeared so near?" cried Judson. He made a most desperate effort, and succeeded in releasing his feet, but his hands still remained firmly bound. He sprung from the hut and attempted to follow, but found it impossible to do so. MacDonald had disappeared from view.

There now was a rattle of musketry at the base of the cliff. The yells of the savages and the cheering of the soldiers told the story that there, too, victory for the latter had been complete.

Billy came bounding up the pathway, and his voice was heard above the din of battle, encouraging his men to make another and a last stand at that point.

"Release me—unbind my hands!" cried Judson, as he sprang toward the chief.

"When I can fight no longer!" was the response.

"Think no more of fighting until you have attended to a more sacred duty," cried Judson. "Your child requires your aid!"

"What do you mean? asked the chief, as he severed the cords which bound Judson.

"That BLANCHE, the blind girl, is your own daughter!"

"How know you this?"

"By the confession of her own mother, your wife. Here it is, written upon this paper. Look for yourself." The chief snatched the letter and read:

"Her father, William Montgomery, is now the chief of the Seminoles, and is known as Billy Bowlegs!"

"It is *her* writing," he cried. "My God, where is Blanche?"

"In the power of MacDonald. He is bearing her up the rock!" Billy was about to start in pursuit, when a detachment of soldiers suddenly came up, and seized him.

"Let me go until I have rescued her—my ch—that captive."

"What captive?"

"Don't you see her? There—there upon that rock, and in the hands of MacDonald."

Upon a ledge, a hundred feet above them, the renegade appeared, bearing his precious burden. He paused, as if opposed by some obstacle. A form appeared beside him. It was old Bob Bradley. MacDonald placed his victim upon the rock, and sprung upon his foe. The struggle was a short one. Bob staggered back, and fell. But, another form appeared upon the scene of action, and, seizing the villain, hurled him from the rocks. His fall was broken to some extent by the branches of the trees, but it was a terrible one.

Charley Morris, for he it was, clasped poor Blanche in his arms, and began his descent amid the cheering of the soldiers, followed by Bradley. They soon reached the landing.

Billy had sprung forward and seized MacDonald, dragging him into the midst of the group. The renegade was yet alive, although he was terribly mangled. He gazed fearfully around him, and then said:

"Even in death I triumph. I *killed* your wife—I—I—"

The eyes of the wretch met those of Charles Morris, and he continued:

"It is to *you* I owe this! But take your maniac, and her brat—curse—cu—" The wretched man spoke no more. He was dead.

Father and lover—old Mr. Loveday and Charles—entered the cabin where Jessie was reposing. She had been awakened by the unusual noise, and as her friends bent over her, she looked up, extending her hands, and smiling sweetly, she exclaimed:

"Father! Charles!" Poor Jessie, indeed, was a maniac no more, as was prophesied by her noble deliverer, Billy Bowlega.

The entire party now assembled in front of the cabin, and explanations were the order of the hour. They, indeed, were necessary, to clear up the remarkable mystery which has enveloped our story like a vail.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FAMILY HISTORY.

A GROAN announced the presence of a sufferer. In the midst of the rejoicings and explanations of that rapturous meeting of friends, old Bradley had lain a silent spectator; but even his strong nature had to succumb to the power of his internal torture. In a moment Judson was bending over him. Even in his pain a smile of satisfaction would flit over his face, to be followed by the pallor and tremor which only too well told of his approaching end.

"How is it with you, my friend?" asked Judson, kindly, as he felt of the wounded man's pulse.

"The end is near, Judson; and I am rejoiced, for I have longed to be with her who has gone before." He spoke with an earnestness so solemn as to impress all with silence. "My friends," he added, "I am rejoiced at this moment—for yourselves and for myself. You are young and have much happiness in store; therefore live and enjoy it. I am past the meridian of life, and have long been waiting for the hour of my deliverance from myself." He raised upon one elbow, when Judson and Charles placed folded blankets under his head, so that he rested in ease. For a minute all was silent. Then he looked around wistfully, as if seeking for some one.

"Who is it you would see?"

"Loveday—is he here?"

The old man advanced and bent over the sufferer. Suddenly his face assumed a deathlike pallor, as the eyes of the two met; then he trembled like an aspen and sunk upon the earth beside the wounded and dying man. All around gazed upon the two men in astonishment, and in their looks read

another mystery. How singularly alike they were ! It is said that, in the hour of death, the face, for a while, assumes the expression of its childhood, as if the beauty and purity of innocence gleamed out for a moment through the windows of the soul to show that it still was there, an immortal counterpart of the being. Loveday's face, with its thin lines and worn, haggard expression, looked so like Bradley's, in feature and a certain family likeness, that a stranger at once would have pronounced them brothers. Were they so ? Bradley smiled, at length, as the old man sunk beside him on the ground—one of those ineffably sweet smiles which betoken a pure heart and a clear conscience. Then he said :

" Henry, you know me now ?"

" I recognize you, my brother ; and would to God it were I who was to go."

" Nay, not so, Henry ; live to comfort your child and to do me justice ; for here on my bed of death, I declare to you that never, in all the past, have I wronged you in word or in deed. You fled from the estate believing me to have usurped the property and to have forced from our dear father the will which gave me all ; but it was all your own mistake. I awaited your return for years, keeping the property all in good order, that you should share it with me, equally—that we should live in brotherhood together, and thus fulfill the great law of love. But you came not ; and, only by chance did I learn of your presence in this beautiful but lonely and dangerous region. I came hither, assuming a false name, that I might approach you as a stranger and accomplish a reconciliation before you should be made aware of my identity. I did approach you, but your scorn even of the family name rendered it impossible to recur to it even ; so here I have dwelt, pleased with the wild life around, glad to be near you and your child, even though as a stranger for whom you entertained a repulsion. I had resolved to restore *all* to you—to take of the estate nothing, for my simple and peaceful life here requires nothing which my hands could not easily obtain. I am going now, my dear brother, and leave all to you. You will find the estate in perfect order, and all you have to do is to take possession as the proper heir and successor, since I die childless."

"No, not so, dear Oscar! Is not Blanche your own daughter?" asked Loveday, with much emotion.

"Not my daughter by blood, but very dear to me; and to you I commit her fortunes, if, indeed, another shall not claim her as his own," and he looked inquiringly into the face of Judson.

"Blanche is my betrothed, and by the memory of her dead mother I shall take her to my keeping as a most precious charge and treasure." The blind girl had stolen up to the spot and now sat on the ground at old Bob's head, hearing all and sobbing convulsively in her speechless grief. Judson's arm stole around her form, but, in a moment she was unconscious, having fainted from excess of sorrow and surprise. She was borne at once, by kind hands, into the cabin, where she lay like one asleep—the gentle Jessie watching over her.

"There is but little mystery about this, my brother," added Old Bob—for such we may continue to call him. "The mother of Blanche came to my cabin, homeless, friendless, penniless. I took her and her child in, and they became of my household. The mother was regarded as my wife and Blanche as my child; and this deception I permitted that they might have my love and protection. The mother is gone before me and I shall soon meet her, where there can be no more wrong and sorrow. Blanche I leave behind, but have no fears for her happiness, since she is beloved by a true soldier and a gentleman."

Old Loveday was silent for some moments; then he bent over the dying man and impressed a kiss upon his forehead—the kiss of reconciliation and affection. He said:

"I pray your forgiveness, Oscar; I know I have been unjust to you and to the memory of our father, whose name I have discarded. I henceforth shall assume it, and shall seek to atone for the wrong I have done you by reverence of your truth and goodness. Blanche shall be to me as my own child, and if God wills that I may live, my days shall be passed in such deeds as I know would most delight you."

He could say no more; tears choked his utterance; and few dry eyes were seen in the circle which surrounded them. Old Bob smiled contentedly and closed his eyes as if in sleep.

He was asleep—to waken never more in this world of pain and tribulation. The crowd around silently withdrew, leaving old Loveday—Henry Ashcroft—alone with the dead.

During the enactment of this affecting scene, Bowlegs had stood apart, as one in a dream. In his hand was the written story of his dead wife's sad life; its perusal had turned back the tide of his past few years of turbulence, and again the old love, the olden time, surged through his memory. But quickly the part played by MacDonald came like a lightning stroke to his heart, and his face fairly quivered in its agony of commingled hate and remorse. Well was it that the monster was dead. Had he still been living, the injured husband must have brained him on the spot; or, if he had escaped, what sweet revenge would it not have been to pursue the villain to the Everglades and to meet him in single combat! But he was dead, beyond the reach of a just vengeance; and Bowlegs' anger passed away, like a tropic storm, as suddenly as it came.

Judson approached. Billy reached out his hand and gave the brave soldier a clasp of true friendliness.

"You know all, my friend," said the chief; "can you, then, still consent to take my child to your bosom as your wife?"

"Indeed, I see no reason for loving Blanche any the less for her sorrows; and as for her parentage, I am only too rejoiced to hear it so well authenticated. She, of course, knows nothing, as yet, as to your relationship to her, not having been informed of the revelations of that paper; but, with your permission, I will bring her hither and she shall know all."

Bowlegs was silent. A great struggle was going on in his breast—the affection of the parent and the duty he owed to her. At length he said: "Much as I desire to press the dear image of my wronged wife to my heart, I dare not permit it. My life has been so apart from hers, and I am so wedded to these savages as their ruler and leader, that my fortunes are cast with them to death. I am now conquered, and must leave the Everglades to join those of the tribe in the Upper Arkansas regions, already gone before me. To confess to her her parentage might prove the source of great unhappiness. Of that she has had only too much; and I shall depart with

out one kiss from her loving lips. "Oh, my child, my child—my poor, wronged wife?" and the chief plunged into the adjoining shrubbery to hide the terrible grief which had broken up the long-sealed fountains of his soul.

The soldiers at a distance, seeing this movement, would have pursued, but Judson lifted his hand in warning, and waved them back. The tears which filled his own eye attested his compassion for the unhappy man. Billy was left to his sorrows; but, ere long, was seen down in the village, where the tribe was gathered preparatory to the final breaking up of the settlement and emigration to the far West. In less than a week's time, we may add, the last of the Seminoles had departed from Florida forever, and Billy Bowlegs thereafter passed from history. When and how he died is not known of men.

A sad yet happy procession it was which wended its way through the morasses of the Kissimmee back to Tampa Bay. It bore the body of Old Bob—Oscar Ashcroft—which loving hands prepared to consign to the earth near the spot where reposed the remains of Blanche's mother. Jessie was happy both in her return to society and in her restoration to the double love of father and lover. Weak and weary, she was tenderly cared for by all—the soldiers never failing of bearing the litter on which she rested, after the lake and boat conveyances had to be abandoned. When she arrived at the village near the fort, so inspired had become her spirits and strength that she walked with ease, and soon became her old self again. Only one cause of unhappiness came. The child who had been the companion of her suffering was discovered to be the lost darling of Mrs. Lilly. The instinct of its true mother had found it out, even in the changed circumstances of a year's absence; and Jessie was constrained to see it borne to another home—glad to see its mother's joy, but sorry to feel that it would no longer call her by the endearing title of "Mamma."

Old Bob Bradley was buried beside the remains of her whose life-path he had smoothed, and whose gentle regard he had so truly treasured. Henry Ashcroft purchased the spot, now hallowed to him by touching memories, and there he resolved his home should be. The cabin was permitted to

remain as the brother had left it, with all its household treasures unmoved. Jessie and Blanche occupied the room of the dead mother, and were only too glad to contribute to the happiness of the living.

But, even this happiness was to be broken in upon by change—the inevitable change of young hearts opening out into new lives, new loves, new aspirations. One sweet day—the first of the new year, when the orange buds were just preparing to put forth again, and the magnolia was awaking from its almost imperceptible sleep, Edward Johnson and Charles Morris became happy husbands, and Jessie and Blanche Ashcroft happy wives. The ceremony was performed in the sweet-scented grove in front of the house, where were gathered a large concourse of spectators—officers and troops from the fort, villagers and the hardy squatters of the entire country roundabout—to all of whom the parties were as much endeared as if an actual family relation existed between them and the worthy couples. It was a scene of true beauty; and, devoid of the usual rough excitement of such occasions in the South, its geniality and thoroughly maintained good order well betokened the nature of the respect entertained for those whose nuptials they celebrated.

When all was over, Henry Ashcroft, calling his children around him, thus addressed them:

"My children—for such you now all are—I have a word to impart to you and a request to make. My brother, Oscar, as you are aware, left the Ashcroft estate, on the Savannah, without an heir, and by law it reverted to me. I find by correspondence with the faithful agent left by Oscar in charge of the property, that it is even larger and richer an inheritance than when it passed into my brother's keeping. My heart is wedded to this spot—I shall not leave it; and to you, Edward and Charles, I desire to commit the ownership of the Savannah river estate. Here are the title deeds, duly executed by my attorney in Savannah, and signed by myself this day in the presence of our magistrate. They place you in possession as owners of the entire property, real and personal, each taking half, by a natural division line which cuts the large plantation into nearly equal parts. You, Charles, will take the lesser half, upon which stands the old homestead, a house large

enough for you all until more shall be added to your circle. Then Edward will have to build on his section, upon a beautiful natural site commanding a full view of the homestead grounds. Thus you will live in brotherhood, enjoying each other's society; and, being a world unto yourselves, will not have to seek abroad for the purest happiness which this world can give. Take this, and this," presenting the title deeds, "and may God, in his goodness, bless you with peace—peace—peace—such as I have never known until this moment."

He sunk upon his chair, overcome by his feelings, yet very happy in the sense of duty well performed. The gift so princely and so utterly unexpected, overwhelmed the young people by its magnitude and the promise it gave of a united family future. With one impulse the party all sank upon their knees before the generous parent and received again his solemn blessing.

Thus was the Ashcroft estate restored to its old glory, for three years had not passed ere it became one of the most notable and productive properties on the river. Happiness reigned over its borders—happiness in the mansion, in the negro quarters, in the fields. Henry Ashcroft had chosen well in his disposition of his daughters and his lands, if happiness was the measure of his return.

Is not our story complete? Not fully. A strange episode remains to be added.

One day there came to the household a new-born babe, the child of Blanche, her first born, a sweet, dear angel child, which soon grew to be truly the light of the household—the delight of its parents. The mother still was blind; but, from various symptoms which supervened after the birth of her child, there was hope that the vail might be lifted from the long obscured sight of the pure-hearted woman. She felt flashes of light over her sightless orbs, and began to picture shadows to her brain. Hope sprung up in Judson's heart at once, for he would never believe that these round full eyes were, indeed, forever dead to light and sense. But days, weeks, months passed and no change came. Physicians were

consulted and all gave 'the same "unvarying answer—“no hope!”

One day there came to the plantation a stranger — a foreigner — whose language none could comprehend. He was tall and lithe as a savage, as darkly bronzed as one, yet evidently not an Indian. After vain efforts to render himself understood he produced from his pocket a slip of paper inclosed in an envelope, on which was this superscription:

EL AYUB ELKAZAR.

Upon the paper was written, in clear, pure English:

“Proceed to Savannah City, in Georgia, of the American Union: proceed up the Savannah river to the Ashcroft estate: seek out the wife of Edward Judson, the daughter of William Montgomery, she that is blind: use upon her thy best art: let her be healed and restored to the beauty of light, and the Prophet shall name thee CHOSEN among his People.”

This was all. No signature, no other commendation or introduction. A dark-visaged man, talking in a tongue too strange for comprehension, stood before the household. Who had sent him? Whither had he come? What was his art?

Long and anxiously Judson debated in his mind the true course to pursue. He was sitting out on the piazza when the stranger advanced up the walk, and had not announced his presence to the household. While doubting and debating what course to pursue, light steps at the door informed him of his wife's presence. She at once advanced to her usual seat, unconscious of the stranger's presence. He was occupying her chair, but upon her appearance arose as silently as a shadow, and she took the seat. Without a word uttered, the man placed his hand upon her forehead and gazed steadily into her eyes. She sat as one under the influence of a spell, a pallor creeping over her face but nothing more. Judson did not move, for he himself was conscious of a magnetic influence which held him to his seat.

Gazing a moment into that beautiful, spiritual face, the man produced from his pocket a lancet of peculiar construction, took her head closely under one arm, and, drawing it backward, had the open eyelids between his outstretched fingers.

Now Judson could not move. A word might ruin all

forever. His breath was almost suspended, while great drops of perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

It was all over in a few moments: the white face was covered with blood, the beautiful form was still and passive as marble. Then, taking from his pocket a handkerchief of the softest, thinnest silk, the stranger bound it over the eyes. A bottle was produced of an exquisitely sweet and permeating scent, with which the bandage was saturated. This done he mentioned to Judson, who at once stepped forward.

"Blanche?"

"Dear Edward?"

"Are you hurt?"

"I have seen the light!"

The stranger said nothing; but producing a piece of paper he wrote in French: "Keep her in darkness one half moon; give her light gradually one half a moon, and she is with you forever after. Allah el Allah!"

This was all. He went down the pathway, and was never seen after taking the steamer at the landing. Whither he came or whither he went is only known to the mysterious presence who sent him to heal the daughter of William Montgomery.

The new moon grew old, and a new moon came again, to behold Blanche Judson restored to sight and a new life.

"A miracle!" said the superstitious.

"A charlatan's dodge!" said the incredulous.

"An Angel's Visit!" said the happy husband, who treasures that silk bandage and the quaint bottle with Arabic inscription upon its label as very precious souvenirs.

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they "spakes,"
Hezekiah Dawson or
Mothers in-law,
He didn't sell the farm
The true story of Frank
lin's life,
I would I were a boy
again,
A pathetic story,

All about a bee,
Scandal,
A dark side view,
To peaser vay,
On learning German,
Mary's ahmall vite lamb
A healthy discourse,
For bus to speak,
Old Mrs. Grimes,
parody,
Lors and eat,
Bill Underwood, pilot,
Old Granley,
The pill peddler's ora-
tion,
Vidder Green's last
words,

Latest Chinese outrage,
The manitest destiny of
the Irishman,
Peggy McCann,
Sprays from Josh Bill
lings,
De circumstances ob de
situation,
Dar's nussin new under
de sun,
A Negro religious poem,
That violinn,
Plente delights,
Our e odditute's views,
Dundreary's wisdom,
Plain language by truth
ful Jane,

My neighbor's dog,
Condensed Mythology,
Pictus,
The Nereides,
Legends of Attila,
The stove-pipe tragedy,
A doketor's drubbles,
The coming man,
The Willgant affair at
Muldeon's,
That little baby round
the corner,
A genewine inference,
An invitatiun to the
bird of liberty,
The crow,
Out-west.

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